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THE HISTORY OF TRADE UNIONISM

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INTRODUCTION TO THE EDITION OF 1902 (FIFTH IMPRESSION, SIXTH THOUSAND).

THE publication of the *History of Trade Unionism* in cheaper form, nearly eight years from the date of its completion, gives us the opportunity of writing a new introductory chapter.

We make no attempt to bring the history down to the present date. Directly the book was through the press in 1894, we turned to the examination of Trade Union problems, to which our closing paragraph had referred. That work grew upon our hands until it included an analysis, not of Trade Union problems alone, but of almost every phase of the organisation and regulation of labour, Factory Legislation no less than Trade Union regulations, and finally also a critical examination of the working of the machinery of Democracy, and a new exposition of the economics of the wage-contract. *Industrial Democracy*, as we ventured to call our work, was not published until the end of 1897, and we were thus able to include the principal developments of Trade Unionism down to that year. A new edition, published almost simultaneously with the present volume, has permitted us to add a further introductory chapter, stating briefly our impressions of the latest developments. But the events of the last decade of

the nineteenth century are still too fresh in our memories for any scientific analysis of their tendencies. All that we can usefully do for the present historical volume is to supplement our statistical account of Trade Unionism in 1892 with the official figures for 1900; to place briefly on record some of the more important changes since our description was written; and to add one or two historical references which have since come to our knowledge.

Writing at the beginning of 1894, when official statisticians placed Trade Union membership at about a million, we were able, with some confidence, to state that the official figures did not include more than two-thirds of the existing Trade Unionism, and to prove that the total membership at the end of 1892 had certainly exceeded a million and a half. Our statement was presently confirmed. Working upon the data thus supplied, the Labour Department of the Board of Trade extended its investigations, and now records an ascertained Trade Union membership for 1892 of 1,502,358. The statistical work of that Department has come to be so complete, and so admirably performed, that the close coincidence of its figures, after seven years' further investigation, with those furnished by our own enquiries, indicates that our exploration of the Trade Union world had been practically exhaustive.

Is Trade Unionism a growing force? The same statistics supply the answer. For three years after 1892, a year of high-water mark, the aggregate membership slightly declined. The total for 1895 was only 1,407,836, though even this was a larger enrolment than existed at any period prior to 1889. But from the year 1895 the total has steadily risen, the numbers for 1900 reaching 1,905,116 This represents an increase in the eight years, upon a total

that was already high, of nearly 27 per cent., or three times the rate at which the population has increased in the same period.

The distribution of Trade Unionism among the various industries remains much as we described it eight years ago with this significant exception that the increase has been greatest in the trades which were already most effectively organised. Speaking generally, the strong have become stronger, whilst those who were weak are now weaker than they were. The following table, taken from the Labour Department's report for 1900, shows how the Trade Union membership in the principal groups of trades has varied since 1892.

Table showing the aggregate Trade Union membership in groups of industries for each of the years 1892-1900 *inclusive.*[1]

Year.	Building.	Mining and Quarrying.	Metal, Engineering and Shipbuilding.	Textile.	Clothing.	Transport.	Other Unions.	Total, all Unions.
1892	157,971	315,272	279,534	204,022	83,299	154,947	307,313	1,502,358
1893	172,870	318,112	266,813	205,546	80,768	142,084	293,224	1,479,417
1894	178,721	307,276	263,572	214,331	81,786	123,896	266,718	1,436,300
1895	179,283	280,065	269,169	218,805	78,560	120,475	261,479	1,407,836
1896	193,341	279,977	303,518	217,950	76,997	134,877	287,805	1,494,465
1897	215,603	283,054	319,745	218,619	75,852	183,994	317,131	1,613,998
1898	232,880	353,780	309,387	214,465	71,202	148,111	318,907	1,648,732
1899	250,637	425,407	331,711	220,605	67,224	163,547	341,738	1,800,869
1900	253,822	501,290	338,075	220,685	67,424	171,219	352,601	1,905,116

The coalminers, cotton operatives, all sections of the building trade, all the industries connected with shipbuilding, the engineers and the railway workers have added considerably to their membership. On the other hand, Trade Unionism has gone back among the agricultural

[1] *Report on Trade Unions* for 1900 (Cd. 773).

labourers, the seamen and fishermen, the clothing trades and the general mass of unskilled and unspecialised labour. Nor can there be said to be any appreciable spread of Trade Unionism among women workers. The total membership has, it is true, increased from about 100,000 in 1892 to 122,047 in 1900. But this increase in voluntary organisation has taken place almost exclusively in the textile trades—those, be it remembered, in which women's labour is most effectively regulated by law. Outside the textile trades, the Trade Union membership among women amounted in 1900 to no more than 13,065, a figure which, we believe, shows no increase on the corresponding total for 1892.

The geographical distribution of Trade Union membership remains, we believe, practically as it was in 1892, except that the rural districts are more than ever destitute, and the great industrial centres better provided than before. If we take the score or so of important national societies representing the principal trades, we find that all of them still appear in the table, and that all but two of them have added to their funds and increased their membership since 1892. In the tailoring and boot- and shoemaking trades, Trade Union membership has declined, and most of the widely extended unions of seamen, navvies, coalporters, dock, agricultural and other labourers have shown themselves unstable. To this result the Gasworkers and General Labourers' Union (established 1889) has proved an honourable exception, its membership standing now at 48,000, as compared with 36,000 eight years ago.

Even more satisfactory is the financial position. The Labour Department's statistics are here confined to the 100 principal unions, comprising nearly two-thirds of the total membership. Since 1892 the total accumulated funds of

these societies have more than doubled, the balance in hand at the end of 1900 amounting to no less than £3,766,625, a sum quite without precedent in the history of labour in this or any other country.

The internal organisation of the great Trade Unions has, we believe, steadily improved, though more slowly than we could have wished. Of the two leading types of the Trade Union Civil Service that we described—the "General Secretary" and the "Trade Official"—both have increased in number and, we think, on the whole in efficiency. On the other hand, the third type, the "Labour Organiser," with his more equivocal qualities, fills, for the moment, a much smaller place in the movement. The routine organisation of the great national societies, whose bookkeeping is necessarily complicated and whose financial transactions are large, now works usually with smoothness and accuracy. Trade Union officials, if not abler than the great leaders of a previous generation, are gradually becoming better educated, and some of them strive most laudably to fit themselves by study for their responsible positions. On the other hand, their work grows steadily more difficult. The industrial complications and economic problems with which they have to cope demand, year by year, a wider outlook on the world, a greater knowledge of the methods of industrial organisation and a firmer grasp of economic principles. The problem of how, in each trade, to adjust all the technical conditions of the contract of service, so as to combine the utmost possible productivity, and the greatest possible stimulus to improvement in processes, with the maintenance and progressive improvement of the manual worker's Standard of Life, is one of the most difficult ever set to man. It is doing no

injustice to the employers to say that, occupied only with one side of this problem, they have not, up to the present, contributed much to its solution—even the best of them regarding it as no part of their business to rack their brains to discover how to maintain or raise the workmen's Standard of Life. Little assistance can be gained from outside. The workmen have necessarily to puzzle out the answer for themselves. That they should, like the employers, have regarded primarily their own side of the problem was only to have been expected. The result is that, except in a few trades, the problem has not yet been solved—has indeed, as yet, scarcely been seriously grappled with—either by masters or by men. Instead of complaining that the Trade Union leaders are not intellectually equal to their high task, we might with more reason wonder why the great captains of industry give the matter so little study, and devote such a small part of their brains to its solution. And when we consider how scanty are the workmen's opportunities for that wide economic training which even employers seldom possess, we may with more justification congratulate ourselves that the English Trade Union leaders should have done as well as they have. At the same time, we cannot but regret that the competitive examinations by which the cotton operatives have, for a whole generation, chosen their officials, have not spread to other trades; that there is not even a qualifying examination for Trade Union officials in such subjects as Trade Union history, the forms and methods of industrial organisation in other trades and other countries than their own, and the economics of the wage-contract; and that so few of the young workmen find themselves able to give any really effective study to these subjects. The Trade Unions have,

moreover, not yet shaken off their reluctance, alluded to in this volume as well as in *Industrial Democracy*, to make appropriate use, in their difficult task, of skilled legal, actuarial and Parliamentary experts; or even to engage a sufficiently expensive official staff of their own.

Passing now from the internal organisation of each Trade Union to that of the Trade Union movement as a whole, we have to record changes, but little substantial improvement. The number and membership of Trades Councils go on increasing, reaching now 171 and 753,924 respectively; but the organisation, working, and influence of these bodies are still, we think, much as we described them in 1894. The Trade Union Congress has been outwardly "reformed," in a manner elsewhere described, but it still retains the defects that we noted eight years ago. The Parliamentary Committee continues to consist of a dozen of the leading Trade Union officials, but is still destitute of the paid staff or the systematic organisation without which it cannot possibly fill its proper place in the Trade Union world. The whole organisation retains, in fact, the imperfections and shortcomings that we noted in 1892, and discussed in some detail in 1897.

It should, however, be added that two further attempts at federal organisation of the Trade Union world have, so far, met with some success. There is now a General Federation of Trade Unions (established 1899), to which, at the end of 1900, sixty-four separate societies, having 386,696 members, were adhering. Its object is, by means of a small contribution from a large membership, to obtain the means of coming to the aid of any of its constituent societies that finds itself engaged in a serious trade dispute. And there is now a Labour Representation Committee,

including, besides about 40 Trade Unions with 400,000 members, two Socialist bodies (the Independent Labour Party and the Fabian Society), and designed solely to promote the candidature of labour representatives to the House of Commons. Time has yet to prove how far these new federal organisations can make themselves stable and effective.

Coming now to the events which deserve mention, we may note that, in spite of certain extensive stoppages, the last decade of the nineteenth century was, on the whole, one of comparative peace in the industrial world. The following table, compiled from the Labour Department's returns, shows the total number of working days lost through disputes of all kinds in the nine closing years of the century:

Table stating for each year from 1892 *to* 1900 *inclusive the number of disputes, the number of workpeople affected, and the aggregate duration in working days.*[1]

Year.	No. of Disputes beginning in each year.	No. of Workpeople affected by Disputes beginning in each year.			Aggregate duration in Working Days of all disputes in each year.
		Directly.	Indirectly.	Total.	
1892	700	——	——	356,799	17,381,936
1893	783	——	——	636,386	31,205,062
1894	1,061	——	——	324,245	9,322,096
1895	876	——	——	263,758	5,542,652
1896	926	147,950	50,240	198,190	3,746,368
1897	864	167,453	62,814	230,267	10,345,523
1898	711	200,769	53,138	253,907	15,289,478
1899	719	138,058	42,159	180,217	2,516,416
1900	648	135,145	53,393	188,538	3,152,694

[1] Compiled from the *Report ... on Strikes and Lock-outs* for 1896 (C—8643) and 1900 (Cd. 689 of 1901), pp. x and xii respectively. The form of the statistics has been slightly varied during the nine years, but not so as appreciably to affect the result.

These figures seem large, and they are much misunderstood. If we must take the number of days lost as a measure of labour disputes, the ordinary reader will gain a clearer idea of the working time thus dissipated when we add that, taking the total number of manual workers at nine millions, each of these persons loses, on an average, through disputes of all kinds, about one and a quarter working days in the year. Strikes and lock-outs account, in fact, for much less loss of working time in the year than our laudable custom of treating Good Friday and Christmas Day as Sundays.

Few of the labour disputes of the last nine years call for mention here. In 1893 occurred the great dispute in the coalmining districts of Yorkshire, Lancashire, and the Midlands, which, measured in days lost, far exceeded in magnitude any other labour trouble of the decade. Its historical importance lies in the definite and persistent claim, put forward by the Miners' Federation, that the workmen's Standard of Life should not be dependent on the fluctuating success or failure of the coalowners in manipulating prices with the great consumers; that, whether the employers chose to employ many men or few, those whom they did employ should receive a "Living Wage"; and that this minimum wage should be regarded, like royalty rents, as a fixed charge on the industry. We had mentioned in our *History* the first clear expression of this idea in 1874. In our *Industrial Democracy* we discussed its validity, and pointed out the extent to which it had yet penetrated the Trade Union world. We need here only add that, though the Miners' Federation did not secure any explicit admission of their claim, the result of the struggle was enormously to strengthen the movement

in favour of a fixed minimum below which wages should not be allowed to fall. The coalowners have not since attempted to reduce the earnings of the miners below the Miners' Federation "minimum"; and it is certain that any attempt to do so would be most strenuously resisted. The conception of a minimum wage has now been embodied in both Victorian and New Zealand law, which we have described elsewhere. We can only add that, in our judgment, the workmen—in demanding that a definite Standard of Life for such men as the employers choose to engage should, over a long period, be made (as a minimum) as independent of the fluctuations of prices as are the royalty rents—are acting in accordance with the teachings of economic science. We may add that the elaborate economic argument on this point, published in our *Industrial Democracy*, has not been seriously controverted by any economist of this or any other country. Further investigations and consideration have but strengthened our confidence in the scientific validity of these conclusions.

The prolonged dispute in the boot and shoe trade in 1895 was due, we believe, principally to the ignorance—at least as great among the employers as among the workmen—of the assumptions underlying particular methods of remuneration, the difficulties to which these give rise, and the manner in which similar difficulties have been successfully surmounted in other trades. In our *Industrial Democracy* we have at some length discussed this controversy. Here we may note that the dispute began by the repudiation by the employers of the complicated and, as we think, ill-considered machinery for conciliation and arbitration to which they had formally agreed; that the men demanded piecework rates of wages, whereas the employers insisted

on thrusting daywork upon them; and that the dispute was brought to a close by the half authoritative influence of the Board of Trade, under pressure of which employers and workmen signed a new agreement, which does not, as we have elsewhere explained, seem to us entirely free from the faults of its predecessor. It has, however, so far succeeded in preventing any serious dispute.

One of the most significant features of practically all the important labour disputes of the last nine years has been the acceptance of the principle of Collective Bargaining. Lord Penrhyn, indeed, as owner of the Bethesda slate-quarries, persists in the old attitude—at one time almost universal—of refusing to enter into any collective agreement as to the conditions under which the quarrymen shall serve him. This dispute, which was temporarily healed in 1896, broke out again in 1900, and remains to-day intractable. Lord Penrhyn takes his stand on the right of doing what he likes with his own, even to the extent of closing the Bethesda slate-quarries against the world, if he cannot get workmen who will let their wages be determined by Individual Bargaining. The Board of Trade finds itself powerless to bring to an end this little survival of "private war."

In the great dispute in the engineering trade in 1897-8, though various other grievances were alleged on either side, the issue of Collective Bargaining was directly raised. The employers asserted, apparently with truth, that the then existing conditions of employment militated against efficiency; that they found it difficult to introduce new machines and new processes; and that the men were reluctant to work them at the highest possible speed. This difficulty had been experienced, at the corresponding stage

of industrial development, in various other trades, notably that of cotton-spinning, in which it had been, for more than a generation, most successfully surmounted. But the engineering employers made no use of the dearly bought experience of the master cotton-spinners, and sought to attain their object in another way. Whilst disclaiming any intention of reducing the general rate of wages, they insisted on complete freedom for each employer to make such conditions as he chose in his own workshop, for each machine, each piece of work, and even each workman. This plan had been tried in other trades, without any permanent success in increasing productivity, and with results injurious to the wage-earners and to the trade as a whole. But the English engineering employers do not seem to have been aware of this fact. At any rate, they made up their minds, seeing that the Collective Bargaining of which they had experience worked badly, to attain their end of maximising productivity by introducing (as regards the method of remuneration, the system of working, the rates of piecework, and the arrangements for overtime) simple Individual Bargaining.

The workmen, on their side, were at least equally short-sighted. A whole century of experience warned them that to accept the employers' proposal of Individual Bargaining was to give up all security for the maintenance of their Standard of Life, with the fatally inevitable consequence of its gradual degradation. On the other hand, they could not resist the evidence of the necessity for maximising productivity, and they could not escape the conviction that any struggle against it must necessarily fail. Yet they met the employers' expedient with no alternative proposal of their own. Other trades had learnt, by painful experience,

how to combine the utmost possible stimulus to speed and productivity with strong Trade Unionism and the effective maintenance of the Standard of Life. The Lancashire Cotton Operatives could have shown them one such expedient, and the Birmingham Brassworkers another. Even in some of their own engineering shops they might have found in practice a third. But the engineering workmen were indisposed to change their habits. They made no offer to revise, in the light of the experience of the cotton-spinners or the brassworkers, such of their customs and collective agreements as militated against the utmost possible efficiency. They resolved simply to offer a stubborn resistance to the employers' proposals. The London branches precipitated a rupture by a demand for the Eight Hours Day. The employers in the great engineering centres in the North and Midlands responded by a general lock-out. In the prolonged stoppage which ensued, the employers proved to be better organised, more ably led, and more persistent in their demands than on any previous occasion. The workmen had put themselves fatally wrong with public opinion by not recognising the need for maximising productivity and by not proposing their own way of attaining this end. Hence the support which their defence of Collective Bargaining attracted, and the sympathy evoked by the London movement for shortening hours, proved inadequate to avert a defeat. After disbursing the greater part of their accumulated funds, the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, with its smaller allies, had practically to accept the employers' terms. It is, however, significant that, even in so complete a victory, the employers found themselves driven to a system of Collective Bargaining even more systematic and national than be-

fore prevailed. The new conditions of working were embodied in a collective agreement, by which every important engineering firm and every engineering workman finds himself practically bound. Any grievances at particular works are now dealt with, first by district conferences, and eventually by a joint conference of employers and employed, representing the whole trade throughout the kingdom; and though, for the moment, the workmen's influence at this joint conference is perhaps less than that of the employers, the mere fact that the conditions are settled at such a national conference, instead of individually between master and man, constitutes a step forward. These joint conferences, meeting as they now do several times a year, for two days' private talk, may in time, even in this most conservative of trades, find conditions compatible alike with the utmost possible stimulus to efficiency and with the effective maintenance of the workmen's Standard of Life. Meanwhile it should be noted that the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, within three years after this calamitous battle, finds both its membership and its accumulated funds larger than before the contest, and far larger than at any previous period of its history. The organisation of the society, which we have elsewhere criticised, remains unaltered.

The prolonged stoppage of the engineering trade in 1897-8, together with Lord Penrhyn's closing the Bethesda slate-quarries in 1900, brought prominently into notice the shortcomings of the Conciliation (Trade Disputes) Act of 1896, to which we had already referred. This Act authorises the Board of Trade to intervene in labour disputes, and to arbitrate if requested by both parties. Lord Penrhyn refuses to ask for arbitration, and prefers to go on

fighting. The men are willing to submit to arbitration, but refuse to surrender. However long and however calamitous to the nation may be the dispute, the Board of Trade has no power to enforce a peaceful settlement.

Subject to this drawback, we may say that the Board of Trade has, since the passing of that Act, made effective use of its powers of conciliation, as a means of promoting collective agreements. It has not always succeeded in making peace, but it has done valuable service in promoting the view, now very widely accepted, that the conditions of employment in any industry are matters for Collective Bargaining by all the parties concerned, in which the obstinacy or caprice of individual workmen or individual employers ought not to be allowed to prolong industrial strife. We have explained, in our *Industrial Democracy*, why, in our opinion, this intervention is likely to be "conciliation" rather than "arbitration," even though in some cases what is essentially the making of a new collective agreement between the parties has to take the form of arbitration. But there is a growing feeling in favour of compulsory settlement rather than no settlement at all, and the success of the New Zealand and Victorian legislation is, we think, greatly influencing English opinion. We have therefore, in a new introductory chapter to the 1902 edition of *Industrial Democracy*, examined in some detail the terms of these laws, and their results.

The historian of Trade Unionism during the last decade of the century will, however, probably consider that the great strikes and gradual changes of the period were of less importance than the series of legal decisions on Trade Union cases pronounced by the House of Lords. In Allen *v.* Flood (Dec., 1897), and, still more, in the Taff Vale

Railway case (July, 1901) and Quinn *v.* Leathem (August, 1901), the highest judicial tribunal has revolutionised the legal position of Trade Unions, in the direction of imposing upon them, what the legislature had refused to confer, namely, the characteristics of incorporation. Trade Unions will now probably find themselves liable to be sued as corporate entities, with the result of having their corporate funds made answerable for damages, whenever any employer or other person feels aggrieved at the action of their officers or agents, and can persuade a judge that this action was contrary to public policy. We have discussed elsewhere what seem to us to be the legal and other consequences of these far-reaching decisions. In this historical volume we can do no more, at this moment, than record their occurrence. But one result of this unexpected law-making by the judges can be already noted. It has already profoundly affected the Trade Union attitude towards politics, and in particular towards "Labour Representation" in the House of Commons. During the prosperity of the last decade, the interest of English working men in "labour politics" had gradually diminished. Eight Hours Bills and constructive Socialism of the Fabian type, to which the Trade Unions were so well disposed in 1890-3, gradually ceased to occupy their thoughts. The number of Labour Members in the House of Commons did not increase. At the end of 1901 a change is already apparent. Readers of this *History* will remember how the adverse legal decisions of 1867-71 brought the whole force of Trade Unionism into the political arena, even the most sedate and conservative trades abandoning their political neutrality in order to secure legislative protection for their organisations. A similar revival of political activity in the

Trade Union world seems now at hand. What form this will take—whether it will confine itself to the revision of the Trade Union Act in such a way as to undo whatever mischief may be involved in the House of Lords' decisions, or whether it will learn from New Zealand and Victoria to substitute the statutory enactment of minimum Common Rules for the present industrial anarchy—no man can yet foretell. We discuss the alternatives elsewhere.[1] They will provide a chapter full of interest for the future historian.

With regard to our account of the origin of Trade Unionism, and of the course of its development down to 1890, we may take the opportunity of stating that our subsequent investigations and reading give us no occasion to alter what we wrote in 1894. We have noted a certain number of additional references and examples, such as those adduced by Professor W. A. S. Hewins in his weighty article in the *Economic Review* (1894). But all these strengthen and confirm the historical conclusions to which we came in our first edition. We should, however, mention that Martin Dunsford's *History of Tiverton* (Exeter, 1790) contains, under date of 1700, an earlier example of the West of England woollen workers' combinations than any given by us. We still remain unaware of any authentic Trade Unionism prior to 1700. The story of the remarkable combinations of the London tailors, and the repeated legislation against them, has since been worked out in detail by our former assistant, Mr. F. W. Galton, in one of the series published by the London School of Economics and Political Science, *The Tailoring Trade* (London, 1896). In another volume, *Workers on*

[1] In the 1902 edition of *Industrial Democracy*.

Their Industries (London, 1895), Mr. Galton has edited some interesting essays by workmen, which contain a few additional facts as to Trade Union origins. We may also mention that our account of the Trade Union legislation of 1824-5 should now be supplemented by that given in the valuable *Life of Francis Place* by Graham Wallas (London, 1898), and our description of the 1871-6 Acts by Mr. George Howell's remarks in *Trade Union Law and Cases*, by Herman Cohen and George Howell (London, 1901).

A word to students may be added as to the bibliography at the end of the volume. This should be read along with the supplementary list given in our *Industrial Democracy*. Our own very large collection of printed matter and manuscripts, not catalogued in these bibliographies, and including much information on wages, conditions of employment and industrial organisation, is now deposited in the British Library of Political Science, attached to the London School of Economics and Political Science, where it can be consulted by any serious student.

SIDNEY and BEATRICE WEBB.

41, GROSVENOR ROAD, WESTMINSTER.
December, 1901.

PREFACE.

It is not our intention to delay the reader here by a conventional preface. As everyone knows, the preface is never written until the story is finished; and this story will not be finished in our time, or for many generations after us. A word or two as to our method of work and its results is all that we need say before getting to our main business.

Though we undertook the study of the Trade Union movement, not to prove any proposition of our own, but to discover what problems it had to present to us, our minds were not so blank on the subject that we had no preconception of the character of these problems. We thought they would almost certainly be economic, pointing a common economic moral; and that expectation still seems to us so natural, that if it had been fulfilled we should have accepted its fulfilment without comment. But it was not so. Our researches were no sooner fairly in hand than we began to discover that the effects of Trade Unionism upon the conditions of labour, and upon industrial organization and progress, are so governed by the infinite technical variety of our productive processes, that they vary from industry to industry and even from trade to trade; and the economic moral varies with them. Where we expected to find an economic thread for a

treatise, we found a spider's web; and from that moment we recognized that what we had first to write was not a treatise, but a history. And we saw that even a history would be impossible to follow unless we separated the general history of the whole movement from the particular histories of thousands of trade societies, some of which have maintained a continuous existence from the last century, whilst others have cropped up, run their brief course, and disappeared. Thus, when we had finished our labour of investigating the records of practically every important trade society from one end of the kingdom to the other, and accumulated piles of extracts, classified under endless trades and subdivisions of trades, we found that we must exclude from the first volume all but a small selection from those documents which appeared to us most significant with regard to the development of the general movement. Many famous strikes and lock-outs, many interesting trade disputes, many sensational prosecutions, and some furious outbursts of riot and crime, together with many drier matters relating to particular trades, have had either to be altogether omitted from our narrative, or else accorded a strictly subordinate reference in their relation to the history of Trade Unionism as a whole. All analysis of the economic effects of Trade Union action we reserve for a subsequent volume on the Problems of Trade Unionism, for which we shall draw more fully from the annals of the separate unions. And in that volume the most exacting seeker for economic morals will be more than satisfied; for there will be almost as many economic morals drawn as societies described.

That history of the general movement, to which we have confined ourselves here, will be found to be part of

the political history of England. In spite of all the pleas of modern historians for less history of the actions of governments, and more descriptions of the manners and customs of the governed, it remains true that history, however it may relieve and enliven itself with descriptions of the manners and morals of the people, must, if it is to be history at all, follow the course of continuous organizations. The history of a perfectly democratic State would be at once the history of a government and of a people. The history of Trade Unionism is the history of a State within our State, and one so jealously democratic that to know it well is to know the English working man as no reader of middle class histories can know him. From the early years of the eighteenth century down to the present day, Democracy, Freedom of Association, *Laisser-faire*, Regulation of the Hours and Wages of Labour, Co-operative Production, Free Trade, Protection, and many other distinct and often contradictory political ideals, have from time to time seized the imagination of the organized wage-earners and made their mark on the course of the Trade Union movement. And, since 1867 at least, wherever the ideals have left their mark on Trade Unionism, Trade Unionism has left its mark on politics. We shall be able to show that some of those overthrows of our party governments which have caused most surprise in the middle and upper classes, and for which the most far-fetched reasons have been given by them and their journalists and historians after the event, carry their explanation on the surface for anyone who knows what the Trade Unionists of the period were thinking. Such demonstrations, however, will be purely incidental, as we have written throughout of Trade Unionism

for its own sake, and not for that of the innumerable side-lights which it throws on party politics.

In our concluding chapter, which we should perhaps offer as an appendix rather than as part of the regular plan of the volume, we have attempted to give a bird's-eye view of the Trade Union world of to-day, with its unequal distribution, its strong sectional organization and defective political machinery, its new governing class of trade officials—above all, its present state of transition in methods, aims and policy, in the face of the multitude of unsettled constitutional, economic, and political problems with which it stands confronted.

A few words upon the work of collecting materials for our work may prove useful to those who may hereafter come to reap in the same field. In the absence of any exhaustive treatment of any period of Trade Union history we have to rely mainly upon our own investigations. But every student of the subject must acknowledge the value of Dr. Brentano's fertile researches into English working-class history, and of Mr. George Howell's thoroughly practical exposition of the Trade Unionism of his own school and his own time. Perhaps the most important published material on the subject is the *Report on Trade Societies and Strikes* issued by the Social Science Association in 1860, a compact storehouse of carefully sifted facts which compares favourably with the enormous bulk of scrappy and unverified information collected by the five historic official inquiries into Trade Unionism between 1824 and 1894. We have, moreover, found a great many miscellaneous facts about Trade Unions in periodical literature and ephemeral pamphlets in the various public libraries all over the country. To facilitate the work of future

students we append to this volume a complete list of such published materials as we have been able to discover. For the early history of combinations we have had to rely upon the public records, old newspapers, and miscellaneous contemporary pamphlets. Thus, our first two chapters are principally based upon the journals of the House of Commons, the minutes of the Privy Council, the publications of the Record Office, and the innumerable broadsheet petitions to Parliament and old tracts relating to Trade which have been preserved in the British Museum, the Guildhall Library, and the invaluable collection of economic literature made by Professor H. S. Foxwell, St. John's College, Cambridge. Most important of all, for the period prior to 1835, are the many volumes of manuscript commentaries, newspaper cuttings, rules, reports, pamphlets, etc., left by Francis Place, and now in the British Museum. This unique collection, formed by the busiest politician of his time, is indispensable, not only to the student of working-class movements, but also to any historian of English political or social life during the first forty years of the century.[1]

But the greater part of our material, especially that relating to the present century, has come from the Trade Unionists themselves. The offices of the older unions contain interesting archives, sometimes reaching back to the eighteenth century—minute-books in which generations of diligent, if unlettered, secretaries, the true historians of

[1] Place's *Letter Books*, together with an unpublished autobiography, preserved by his family, are now in the custody of Mr. Graham Wallas, who is preparing a critical biography of this great reformer, which will throw much new light on all the social and political events of English history between 1798 and 1840.

a great movement, have struggled to record the doings of their committees, and files of Trade Union periodicals, ignored even by the British Museum, through which the plans and aspirations of ardent working-class politicians and administrators have been expounded month by month to the scattered branches of their organizations. We were assured at the outset of our investigation that no outsider would be allowed access to the inner history of some of the old-fashioned societies. But we have found this prevalent impression as to the jealous secrecy of the Trade Unions without justification. The secretaries of old branches or ancient local societies have rummaged for us their archaic chests with three locks, dating from the eighteenth century. The surviving leaders of a bygone Trade Unionism have ransacked their drawers to find for our use the rules and minutes of their long-forgotten societies. In many a working man's home in London and Liverpool, Newcastle and Dublin—above all, in Glasgow and Manchester—the descendants of the old skilled handicraftsmen have unearthed "grandfather's indentures," or "father's old card," or a tattered set of rules, to help forward the investigation of a stranger whom they dimly recognized as striving to record the annals of their class. The whole of the documents in the offices of the great National and County Unions have been most generously placed at our disposal, from the printed reports and sets of rules to the private cash accounts and executive minute books. In only one case has a General Secretary refused us access to the old books of his society, and then simply on the ground that he was himself proposing to write its history, and regarded us as rivals in the literary field.

Nor has this generous confidence been confined to the

musty records of the past. In the long sojourns at the various industrial centres which this examination of local archives has necessitated, every facility has been afforded to us for studying the actual working of the Trade Union organization of to-day. We have attended the sittings of the Trades Councils in most of the large towns; we have sat through numerous branch and members' meetings all over the country; and one of us has even enjoyed the exceptional privilege of being present at the private deliberations of the Executive Committees of various national societies, as well as at the special delegate meetings summoned by the great federal Unions of Cotton-spinners, Cotton-weavers and Coalminers for the settlement of momentous issues of trade policy, and at the six weeks' sessions in 1892 in which sixty chosen delegates of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers overhauled the trade policy and internal administration of that world-wide organization.

We have naturally not confined ourselves to the workmen's side of the case. In almost every industrial centre we have sought out representative employers in the different industries. From them we have received many useful hints and criticisms. But, as might have been expected, the great captains of industry are, for the most part, absorbed in the commercial side of their business, and are seldom accurately acquainted with the details of the past, or even of the present, organization of their workmen. Of more assistance in our task have been the secretaries of the various employers' associations. Especially in the shipbuilding ports have these gentlemen placed at our disposal their experience in collective negotiation with the different sections of labour, and the private statistics compiled by their associations. But of all the employing class we have

found the working managers and foremen, who have themselves often been workmen, the best informed and most suggestive critics of Trade Union organization and methods. We have often regretted that precisely this class is the most difficult of access to the investigator of industrial problems, and the least often called as witnesses before Royal Commissions.

The difficulty of welding into narrative form the innumerable details of the thousands of distinct organizations, and of constructing out of their separate chronicles anything like a history of the general movement, has, we need hardly say, been very great. We are painfully aware of the shortcomings of our work, both from a literary and from a historical point of view. We have been encouraged in our task by the conviction—strengthened as our investigation proceeded—that the Trade Union records contain material of the utmost value to the future historian of industrial and political organization, and that these records are fast disappearing. Many of the older archives are in the possession of individual workmen, who are insensible of their historical value. Among the larger societies it is not uncommon to find only one complete set of rules, reports, circulars, etc., in existence. A fire, a removal to new premises, or the death of an old secretary frequently results in the disappearance of everything not actually in daily office use. The keen investigator or collector will appreciate the extremity of the vexation with which we have learnt, on arriving at an ancient Trade Union centre, that the "old rubbish" of the office had been "cleared out" six months before. The local public libraries, and even the British Museum, seldom contain any of the internal Trade Union records new or old. We have there-

fore not only collected every Trade Union document that we could acquire, but we have made lengthy extracts from, and abstracts of, the piles of minute-books, reports, rules, circulars, pamphlets, working-class newspapers, etc., which have been lent to us.

This collection of material, and, indeed, the wide scope of the investigation itself, would have been impossible if we had not had the good fortune to secure the help of a colleague exceptionally well qualified for the work. In Mr. F. W. Galton we have found a devoted assistant, to whose unwearied labours we owe the extensive range of our material and our statistics. Himself a skilled handicraftsman, and for some time secretary to his Trade Union, he has brought to the task not only keen intelligence and unremitting industry, but also a personal acquaintance with the details of Trade Union life and organization, which has rendered his co-operation of inestimable value. We have incorporated in our last chapter a graphic sketch from his pen of the inner life of a Trade Union.

We have, moreover, received the most cordial assistance from all quarters. If we were to acknowledge by name all those to whom our thanks are due, we should set forth a list of nearly all the Trade Union officials in the kingdom. Individual acknowledgment is in their case the less necessary, in that many of them are our valued personal friends. Only second to this is our indebtedness to many of the great "captains of industry," notably to Mr. Hugh Bell, of Middlesboro', and Colonel Dyer, of Elswick, and the secretaries of employers' associations, whose time has been freely placed at our disposal. To Professor H. S. Foxwell, Mr. Frederic Harrison, Professor E. S. Beesly, Mr. Robert Applegarth, and Mr. John Burns, M.P., we are especially

indebted for the loan of many scarce pamphlets and working-class journals, whilst Mr. John Burnett and Mr. Henry Crompton have been good enough to go through one or more of our chapters in proof, and to improve them by numerous suggestions. And there are two dear comrades and friends to whose repeated revision of every line of our manuscript, the volume owes whatever approach to literary merit it may possess.

The bibliography has been prepared from our material by Mr. R. A. Peddie, to whom, as well as to Miss Appleyard for the laborious task of verifying nearly all the quotations, our thanks are due.

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THE HISTORY
OF
TRADE UNIONISM.

CHAPTER I.

THE ORIGINS OF TRADE UNIONISM.

A TRADE UNION, as we understand the term, is a continuous association of wage-earners for the purpose of maintaining or improving the conditions of their employment. This form of association has, as we shall see, existed in England for nearly two centuries, and cannot be supposed to have sprung at once fully developed into existence. But although we shall briefly discuss the institutions which have sometimes been described as the forerunners of Trade Unionism, our narrative will commence only from the beginning of the eighteenth century, before which date we have been unable to discover the existence in the British Isles of anything falling precisely within our definition. Moreover, although it is suggested that analogous associations may have existed during the Middle Ages in various parts of the Continent of Europe, we have no reason to suppose that such institutions exercised any influence whatever upon the rise and development of the Trade Union Movement in this country. We feel ourselves, therefore, warranted, as we are indeed compelled, to limit our history exclusively to the Trade Unions of the United Kingdom.

We have, by our definition, expressly excluded from our history any account of the innumerable instances in which the manual workers have formed ephemeral combinations against their social superiors. Strikes are as old as history itself. The ingenious seeker of historical parallels might, for instance, find in the revolt, B.C. 1490, of the Hebrew brickmakers in Egypt against being required to make bricks without straw, a curious precedent for the strike of the Stalybridge cotton-spinners, A.D. 1892, against the supply of bad material for their work. But we cannot seriously regard, as in any way analogous to the Trade Union Movement of to-day, the innumerable rebellions of subject races, the slave insurrections, and the semi-servile peasant revolts of which the annals of history are full. These forms of the "labour war" fall outside our subject, not only because they in no case resulted in permanent associations, but because the "strikers" were not hired wage-workers seeking to improve the conditions of a contract of service into which they had voluntarily entered.

When, however, we pass from the annals of slavery or serfdom to those of the nominally free citizenship of the mediæval town, we are on more debatable ground. We make no pretence to a thorough knowledge of English town-life in the Middle Ages. But it is clear that there were at all times, alongside of the independent master craftsmen, a number of hired journeymen, who are known to have occasionally combined against their rulers and governors. These combinations are stated sometimes to have lasted for months, and even for years. In 1387, for instance, the serving-men of the London cordwainers, in rebellion against the "overseers of the trade," [1] are reported to be aiming at making a permanent fraternity. Nine years later the serving-men of the saddlers, "called yomen," assert that they have had a fraternity of their own "time out of mind," with a livery and appointed

[1] Riley's *Memorials of London and London Life in the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Centuries* (London, 1888), p. 495.

governors. The masters declared, however, that the association was only thirteen years old, and that its object was to raise wages.[1] In 1417 the tailors' "serving men and journeymen" in London have to be forbidden to dwell apart from their masters as they hold assemblies and have formed a kind of association.[2] Nor were these fraternities confined to London. In 1538 the Bishop of Ely reports to Cromwell that twenty-one journeymen shoemakers of Wisbech have assembled on a hill without the town, and sent three of their number to summon all the master shoemakers to meet them, in order to insist upon an advance in their wages, threatening that "there shall none come into the town to serve for that wages within a twelve month and a day, but we woll have an harme or a legge of hym, except they woll take an othe as we have doon."[3]

These instances, derived from the very fragmentary materials as yet printed, suggest that a more complete examination of the unpublished archives might possibly disclose a whole series of journeymen fraternities, and enable us to determine the exact constitution of these associations. It is, for instance, by no means clear whether the instances cited were strikes against employers, or revolts against the authority of the gild. Our impression is that the case of the Wisbech shoemakers, and possibly some of the others, represent the embryo stage of a Trade Union. Supposing, therefore, that further investigation were to prove that such ephemeral combinations by hired journeymen against their employers did actually pass into durable associations of like character, we should be constrained to

[1] Riley's *Memorials of London and London Life in the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Centuries* (London, 1888), pp. 542, 3.

[2] Riley's *Memorials*, p. 609; Clode's *Early History of the Merchant Taylors' Company*, vol. i. p. 63.

[3] *Calendars of State Papers: Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII.*, vol. xiii. part i. 1538, No. 1454, p. 537. Compare the ephemeral combinations cited by Fagniez, *Études sur l'industrie et la classe industrielle à Paris* (Paris, 1877), pp. 76, 82, &c.

begin our history with the fourteenth or fifteenth century. But, after detailed consideration of every published instance of a journeyman's fraternity in England, we are fully convinced that there is as yet no evidence of the existence of any such durable and independent combination of wage-earners against their employers during the Middle Ages.

There are certain other cases in which associations, which are sometimes assumed to have been composed of journeymen,[1] maintained a continuous existence. But

[1] Professor Ashley has assumed that, in the company of "Bachelors" or "Yeomen Tailors" connected with the Merchant Taylors' Company of London between 1446 and 1661, we have "for the first time revealed to us the existence, and something of the constitution, of a journeyman's society which succeeded in maintaining itself for a prolonged period." More careful examination of the materials from which Professor Ashley has drawn his vivid picture of this supposed journeymen's society leads us to believe that it was not composed of journeymen at all, but of masters. This might, in the first place, have been inferred from the fact that in the ranks of the supposed journeymen were to be found opulent leaders like Richard Hilles, the friend of Cranmer and Bullinger, who "became a Bachelor in Budge of the Yeoman Company" in 1535 (Clode, *Early History of the Merchant Taylors' Company*, vol. ii. p. 64), and Sir Leonard Halliday, afterwards Lord Mayor, who was in the Bachelors' Company from 1572 to 1594, when "he was elected a member of the higher hierarchy of the Corporation" (*Ibid.* p. 237). The Bachelors' Company, indeed, far from being composed of needy wage-earners, bore the greater part of the expense of the pageant in connection with the mayoralty, and managed the whole proceedings. The Bachelors "in Foynes" and those "in Budge" are all named as marching in the procession in "gownes to be welted with velvet, and there jackyttes, cassockes, and doublettes to be either of satten damaske, taffataye" (*Ibid.* pp. 262–266). And when, in 1609, the Company was assessed to contribute to the Plantation of Ulster, the Bachelors contributed nearly as much as the merchants (£155 10s. from ten members as compared with £187 10s. from nine members, *Ibid.* vol. i. pp. 327–9). Whether the Bachelors' Company ever included any large proportion of hired journeymen appears extremely doubtful, though its object was clearly the regulation of the trade. The members, according to the Ordinance of 1613, paid a contribution of 2s. 2d. a quarter "for the poor of the fraternity." This may be contrasted with the quarterage of 8d. a year or 2d. per quarter, levied, according to order of August, 1578,

in all these cases the "Bachelors' Company," presumed to be a journeymen's fraternity, formed a subordinate department of the masters' gild, by the rulers of which it was governed. It will be obvious that associations in which the employers dispensed the funds and appointed the officers can bear no analogy to modern Trade Unions.

The explanation of the tardy growth of stable combination among hired journeymen is, we believe, to be found in the prospects of economic advancement which the skilled handicraftsman still possessed. We do not wish

on every servant or journeyman free of the City. The funds of the two companies were kept distinct, but frequent donations were made from one to the other, and not, as Professor Ashley suggests, only from the inferior to the superior (*Ibid.* vol. i. pp. 67–9). That the Bachelors' Company was by no means confined to journeymen is clear. Sir Leonard Halliday, for instance, became a freeman in April, 1564, on completing his apprenticeship, and at once set up in business for himself, obtaining a charitable loan for the purpose. Yet, although he prospered in business, "in 1572 we find him assessed as in the Bachelors' Company," and he was not elected to the superior company until 1594 (*Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 237). And in the Ordinance of 1507, "for all those persons that shall be abled by the maister and Wardeins to holde hous or shop open," it is provided that the person desiring to set up shop shall not only pay a licence fee, but also "for his incomyng to the bachelers' Company and to be broder with theym iij^{s} iiij^{d}" (Clode, *Memorials of the Merchant Taylors' Company*, p. 209). Nor do the instances of its action which Professor Ashley adduces imply, as he seems to suppose, that it had at heart the interest of the wage-earners, as distinguished from that of the employers. The hostility to foreigners, the desire to secure government clothing contracts, and the preference for a limitation of apprentices to two for each employer are all consistent with the theory that the Bachelors' Company was, like its superior, composed of masters, probably less opulent than the governing clique, and perhaps occupied in tailoring rather than in the business of a clothier or merchant. The other instances of identification of "Bachelors' Companies" with journeymen's societies are no more convincing than that of the Merchant Taylors. That the "valets," serving-men, or journeymen in many trades possessed some kind of "almsbox," or charitable funds of their own is, indeed, clear, but that this was ever used in trade disputes, or was independent of the masters' control, must at present be regarded as highly improbable. The strongest instance of independence is that of the Oxford cordwainers. (*Selections from the Records of the City of Oxford*, by William H. Turner, Oxford, 1880.)

to suggest the existence of any Golden Age in which each skilled workman was his own master, and the wage system was unknown. The earliest records of English town history imply the presence of hired journeymen, who were not always contented with their wages. But the apprenticed journeyman in the skilled handicrafts belonged, until comparatively modern times, to the same social grade as his employer, and was, indeed, usually the son of a master in the same or an analogous trade. So long as industry was carried on mainly by small masters, each employing but one or two journeymen, the period of any energetic man's service as a hired wage-earner cannot normally have exceeded a few years, and the industrious apprentice might reasonably hope, if not always to marry his master's daughter, at any rate to set up in business for himself. Any incipient organisation would always be losing its oldest and most capable members, and would of necessity be confined, like the Coventry journeymen's Gild of St. George, to "the young people,"[1] or like the ephemeral fraternity of journeymen tailors of 1415–7, to "a race at once youthful and unstable,"[2] from whose inexperienced ranks it would be hard to draw a supply of good Trade Union leaders. We are therefore able to understand how it is that, whilst industrial oppression belongs to all ages, it is not until the changing conditions of industry had reduced to an infinitesimal chance the journeyman's prospect of becoming himself a master, that we find the passage of ephemeral combinations into permanent trade societies. This inference is supported by the experience of an analogous case in the Lancashire of to-day. The "piecers," who assist at the "mules," are employed and paid by the operative cotton-spinners under whom they work. The "big piecer" is often an adult man, quite as skilled as the spinner himself, from whom, however, he receives very inferior wages. But although

[1] Dugdale's *Antiquities of Warwickshire* (1656), p. 125.

[2] Riley's *Memorials*, p. 653; Clode, *Early History of Merchant Taylors' Company*, vol. i. p. 63.

the cotton operatives display a remarkable aptitude for Trade Unionism, attempts to form an independent organisation among the piecers have invariably failed. The energetic and competent piecer is always looking forward to becoming a spinner, interested rather in reducing than in raising piecers' wages. The leaders of any incipient movement among the piecers have necessarily fallen away from it on becoming themselves employers of the class from which they have been promoted. But though the Lancashire piecers have always failed to form an independent Trade Union, they are not without their associations, in the constitution of which we may find some hint of the relation between the gild of the master craftsmen and the Bachelors' Company or other subordinate association in which journeymen may possibly have been included. The spinners have, for their own purposes, brigaded the piecers into piecers' associations. These associations, membership of which is usually compulsory, form a subordinate part of the spinners' Trade Union, the officers of which fix and collect the contributions, draw up the rules, dispense the funds, and in every way manage the affairs, without in the slightest degree consulting the piecers themselves. It is not difficult to understand that the master craftsmen who formed the court of a mediæval gild might, in a similar way, have found it convenient to brigade the journeymen or other inferior members of the trade into a subordinate fraternity, for which they fixed the quarterly dues, appointed the "wardens" or "wardens' substitutes," administered the funds, and in every way controlled the affairs, without admitting the journeymen to any voice in the proceedings.[1]

If further proof were needed that it was the prospect of economic advancement that hindered the formation of permanent combinations among the hired journeymen of the Middle Ages, we might adduce the fact that certain classes of skilled manual workers, who had no chance

[1] Compare Fagniez, *Études sur l'industrie et la classe industrielle à Paris* (Paris, 1877), p. 123.

of becoming employers, do appear to have succeeded in establishing long-lived combinations which had to be put down by law. The masons, for instance, had long had their "yearly congregations and confederacies made in their general chapiters assembled," which were expressly prohibited by Act of Parliament in 1425.[1] And the tilers of Worcester are ordered by the Corporation in 1467 to "sett no parliament amonge them."[2] It appears probable, indeed, that the masons, wandering over the country from one job to another, were united, not in any local gild, but in a trade fraternity of national extent. Such an association may, if further researches throw light upon its constitution and working, not improbably be found to possess many points of resemblance to the Friendly Society of Operative Stonemasons of the present day, which was established in 1832. But, unlike the operative in the modern building trades, the mason of the Middle Ages served, not a master *entrepreneur*, but the customer himself, who provided the materials, supervised the work, and engaged, at specified daily rates, both the skilled mechanics and their labourers or apprentices.[3] In contrast to the handicraftsmen of the towns, the masons, tilers, &c., remained, from the completion of their apprenticeship to the end of their working lives, in one and the same economic position, a position which appears to have been intermediate between those of the master craftsman and the journeyman of the other trades. Like the jobbing carpenter of the country village of to-day, they were independent producers, each controlling the processes of his own craft, and dealing directly with the customer. But unlike the typical master craftsman of the handicraft trades they sold nothing but labour, and their own labour only, at regulated customary rates,

[1] 3 Henry VI. c. 1; see also 34 Edward III. c. 9.

[2] "Ordinances of Worcester," Art. lvii., in Toulmin Smith's *English Gilds*, p. 399.

[3] Compare the analogous instances given by Fagniez, *Études sur l'industrie et la classe industrielle à Paris*, p. 203 (Paris, 1877).

and were unconcerned, therefore, with the making of profit, whether upon the purchase and sale of materials or upon the hiring of subordinate workers.[1] The stability of their combinations was accordingly not prevented by those influences which, as we have suggested, proved fatal in England to the corresponding attempts of the hired journeymen of the handicrafts.

But if the example of the building trades in the Middle Ages supports our inference as to the cause of the tardy growth of combination among the journeymen in other trades, the "yearly congregations and confederacies" of the masons might themselves demand our attention as instances of early Trade Unionism. Of the constitution, function, or ultimate development of these mediæval associations in the building trades we know unfortunately nothing. It is remarkable that there is, so far as we are aware, no trace of their existence later than the fifteenth century. During the eighteenth century there is, as we shall see, no lack of information as to combinations of workmen in practically every other skilled trade. The employers appear to have been perpetually running to Parliament to complain of the misdeeds of their workmen. But of combinations in the building trades we have found practically no trace until the very end of the century. If, therefore, adhering strictly to the letter of our definition, we accepted the masons' confederacy as a Trade Union, we should be compelled to regard the building trades as presenting the unique instance of an industry which had a period of Trade Unionism in the fifteenth century, then passed for several centuries into a condition in which Trade Unionism was impossible, and finally changed once more to a state in which Trade Unions flourished.

[1] Dr. Brentano has noticed (p. 81) that the great majority of the legal regulations of wages in the Middle Ages relate (if not to agriculture) to the building trades; and it may be that these were, like modern cab-fare regulations, intended more for the protection of the customer than for that of the capitalist.

Our own impression is, however, that the "congregations and confederacies" of the masons are more justly to be considered the embryonic stage of a gild of master craftsmen than of a Trade Union. There appears to us to be a subtle distinction between the economic position of workers who hire themselves out to the individual consumer direct, and those who, like the typical Trade Unionist of to-day, serve an employer who stands between them and the actual consumers, and who hires their labour in order to make out of it such a profit as will provide him with his "wages of management." We suggest that, with the growing elaboration of domestic architecture, the superior craftsmen tended more and more to become small masters, and any organisations of such craftsmen to pass insensibly into the ordinary type of masters' gild.[1] Under such a system of industry the journeymen would possess the same prospects of economic advancement that hindered the growth of stable combinations in the ordinary handicrafts, and in this fact may lie the explanation of the striking absence of evidence of any Trade Unionism in the building trades right down to the end of the eighteenth century.[2] When, however, the capitalist

[1] Such a master craftsmen's society we see in the Masons' "Lodge of Atchison's Haven," which, on December 27, 1735, passed the following resolution: "The Company of Atchison's Haven being mett together, have found Andrew Kinghorn guilty of a most atrocious crime against the whole Trade of Masonry, and he not submitting himself to the Company for taking his work so cheap that no man could have his bread of it. Therefore in not submitting himself he has excluded himself from the said Company; and therefore the Company doth hereby enact that no man, neither fellow craft nor enter'd prentice after this shall work as journeyman under the said Andrew Kinghorn, under the penalty of being cut off as well as he. Likewise if any man shall follow the example of the said Andrew Kinghorn in taking work at eight pounds Scots per rood, the walls being twenty feet high, and rebates at eighteen pennies Scots per foot, that they shall be cut off in the same manner." (*Sketch of the Incorporation of Masons*, by James Cruikshank (Glasgow, 1879), pp. 131, 132.)

[2] Thorold Rogers points out that the Merton College bell-tower was built in 1448–50 by direct employment at wages. The new quadrangle, early in the seventeenth century, was put out to contract

builder or contractor began to supersede the master mason, master plasterer, &c., and this class of small *entrepreneurs* had again to give place to a hierarchy of hired workers, Trade Unions, in the modern sense, began, as we shall see, to arise.[1]

We have dwelt at some length upon these ephemeral associations of wage-earners and on the journeymen fraternities of the Middle Ages, because it might plausibly be argued that they were in some sense the predecessors of the Trade Union. But strangely enough it is not in these institutions that the origin of Trade Unionism has usually been sought. For the predecessor of the modern Trade Union, men have turned, not to the mediæval associations of the wage-earners, but to those of their employers—that is to say, the Craft Gilds.[2] The out-

with a master mason and a master carpenter respectively, but the college still supplied all the material. (*History of Agriculture and Prices*, vol. i. pp. 258–60; iii. pp. 720–37; v. pp. 478, 503, 629.)

[1] In this connection may be mentioned the London watermen, who have always dealt directly with their customers, and who possess a tradition of having been continuously organised since 1350. Power to regulate the trade of watermen was, in 1555, conferred by Act of Parliament upon the then incorporated Thames Watermen and Lightermen's Company, the administration of which appears to have been, from the first, entirely in the hands of the master lightermen. The watermen, who had no masters, were compelled to take out the freedom of this Company, and the existing Trade Union, the Amalgamated Society of Watermen and Lightermen, was established in 1872 for the express purpose of obtaining some representation of the working watermen and the journeymen lightermen on the Court of the Company. Previous associations of working watermen for trade purposes seem to have been in existence in 1789 (a Rotherhithe Society of Watermen) and in 1799 (Friendly Society of Watermen usually plying at the Hermitage Stairs, in the parish of St. John, Wapping); and Mayhew describes, in 1850, local "turnway societies," regulating the sharing of custom, and a Watermen's Protective Society, to resist non-freemen. (*London Labour and the London Poor:* London, 1851.)

[2] Schanz, however, in his *Zur Geschichte der Deutschen Gesellenverbände* (Leipzig, 1877), suggests that the associations of journeymen which flourished in Germany side by side with the Craft Gilds prior to the Thirty Years' War (1618), were, in fact, virtually Trade Unions. Compare Schmoller's *Strassburger Tucher und Weberzunft* (Strassburg, 1879).

ward resemblance of the Trade Union to the Craft Gild had long attracted the attention, both of the friends and the enemies of Trade Unionism; but it was the publication in 1870 of Professor Brentano's brilliant study on the "Origin of Trades Unions" that gave form to the popular idea.[1] Without in the least implying that any connection could be traced between the mediæval gild and the modern Trade Union, Dr. Brentano suggested that the one was in so far the successor of the other, that both institutions had arisen "under the breaking up of an old system, and among the men suffering from this disorganisation, in order that they might maintain independence and order."[2] And when Mr. George Howell prefixed to his history of Trade Unionism a paraphrase of Dr. Brentano's account of the gilds, it became accepted that the Trade Union had, in some undefined way, really originated from the Craft Gild.[3] We are therefore under the obligation of digressing to examine the relation between

[1] Dr. Brentano's essay was originally prefixed to Toulmin Smith's *English Gilds*, published by the Early English Text Society in 1870. It was republished separately as *The History and Development of Gilds and the Origin of Trades Unions* (London, 135 pp., 1870), and it is to this edition that we refer. Dr. Brentano's larger work, *Die Arbeitergilden der Gegenwart* (Leipzig, 2 vols., 1871–2), includes this essay, and also his article in the *North British Review* for October, 1870, on "The Growth of a Trades Union." It is only fair to say that in this, the ablest study of English Trade Union history that has yet appeared, Dr. Brentano lends no support to the popular idea of any actual descent of the Trade Unions from the gilds. The *Cobden Club Essays* (London, 1872) contain a good article on Trade Unions, by Mr. Joseph Gostick, in which it is argued that these associations were, in England, unknown before the eighteenth century, and had no connection with the gilds.

[2] Page 102.

[3] The first hundred pages of Mr. George Howell's *Conflicts of Capital and Labour* (London, first edition, 1877; second edition, 1891) are a close paraphrase of Dr. Brentano's essay, practically the whole of which appears, often in the same words, as Mr. Howell's own. But already in 1871 Dr. Brentano, in his *Arbeitergilden der Gegenwart*, vol. i. ch. iii. p. 83, expressly connected the Trade Unions, like Schanz, not with the gilds, but with the Journeymen Fraternities, which he suggests may have "awaked under changed circumstances to new strength and life, and to a new policy."

the mediæval gild and the modern Trade Union. If it could be shown that the Trade Unions were, in any way, the descendants of the old gilds, it would clearly be the origin of the latter that we should have to trace.

The supposed descent of the Trade Unions from the mediæval Craft Gild rests, as far as we have been able to discover, upon no evidence whatsoever. The historical proof is all the other way. In London, for instance, more than one Trade Union has preserved an unbroken existence from the eighteenth century. The Craft Gilds still exist in the City Companies, and at no point in their history do we find the slightest evidence of the branching off from them of independent journeymen's societies. By the eighteenth century the London journeymen had lost whatever participation they may possibly once have possessed in the Companies, which had for the most part already ceased to have any connection with the trades of which they bore the names.[1] It is sometimes suggested that the London Companies have had an exceptional history, and that in towns in which the gilds underwent a more normal development they may have given rise to the modern trade society. This suggestion rests on no better foundation than the other. Neither in Bristol nor in Preston, neither in Newcastle nor in Glasgow, have we been able to trace the slightest connection between the slowly dying gilds and the upstarting Trade Unions. At Sheffield Mr. J. M. Ludlow, basing himself on an account by Mr. Frank Hill, once expressly declared [2] that direct affiliation could be proved. Diligent

[1] So long as the Companies continued to exercise any jurisdiction over their trades, we find them (as in the cases of the London Framework-knitters and the Dublin Silkweavers) supported by any workmen's combinations that existed. In exceptional instances, such as the London Brushmakers, Basketmakers, and Watermen, we find this alliance for the exclusion of "illegal men" continuing into the nineteenth century, and (as regards the Watermen) down to the present time.

[2] *Macmillan's Magazine*, February, 1861, relying on the Social Science *Report on Trade Societies and Strikes*, 1860, p. 521.

inquiry into the character and history of the still flourishing Cutlers' Company demonstrates that this exclusively masters' association at no time originated or engendered any of the numerous Trade Unions with which Sheffield abounds. There remains the case of Dublin, where some of the older unions themselves claim descent from the gilds. Here, too, careful search reveals, not only the absence of any affiliation or direct descent, but also the impossibility of any organic connection between the exclusively Protestant gilds which were not abolished until 1842, and the mainly Roman Catholic Trade Unions which attained their greatest influence many years before.[1] We assert, indeed, with some confidence, that in no case did any Trade Union in the United Kingdom arise, either directly or indirectly, from a Craft Gild.

It is often taken for granted that the Trade Union, whatever may have been its origin, represents the same elements, and plays the same part in the industrial system of the nineteenth century, as the Craft Gild did in that of the Middle Ages. A brief analysis of what is known of the gilds will be sufficient to show that these organisations were even in their purest days essentially different, both in structure and function, from the modern trade society.

For the purpose of this comparison it will be unnecessary for us to discuss the rival theories of historians as to the nature and origin of the Craft Gilds. We may agree, on the one hand, with Dr. Brentano[2] in maintaining that the free craftsmen associated in order to stop the deterioration of their condition and encroachments on their earnings, and to protect themselves against "the abuse of power on the part of the lords of the town, who tried to reduce the free to the dependence of the unfree." On the other hand, we may believe with Dr. Cunningham[3]

[1] See Appendix *On the Assumed Connection between the Trade Unions and the Gilds in Dublin.*

[2] *Gilds and Trade Unions* (London, 1870), p. 54.

[3] *History of Industry and Commerce*, vol. i. p. 310. Dr. Gross, in his *Gild Merchant*, apparently takes a similar view

that the Craft Gilds were "called into being, not out of antagonism to existing authorities, but as new institutions, to which special parts of their own duties were delegated by the burgh officers of the local Gild Merchant," as a kind of "police system," in fact, by which the community controlled the local industries in the interest of the consumer. Or again, we may accept the middle view advanced by Professor W. J. Ashley,[1] that the gilds were self-governing bodies of craftsmen, initiating their own trade regulations, the magistrates or town council having a real, if somewhat vague, authority to sanction or veto these ordinances for the good of the citizens. Each of these three views is supported by numerous instances, and to determine which theory represents the rule and which the exception would involve a statistical knowledge of Craft Gilds for which the material has not yet been collected. It will be evident that if Dr. Cunningham's theory of the Craft Gild is the correct one, there can be no essential resemblance between these semi-municipal bodies and the Trade Unions of to-day. Dr. Brentano, however, produces ample evidence that, in some cases at any rate, the gilds acted, not with any view to the protection of the consumer, but, like the Trade Unions, for the furtherance of the interests of their own members—that is, of one class of producers. Accepting for the moment the view that the Craft Gild, like the Trade Union, or the Employers' Association, belonged to the genus of "associations of producers," let us examine briefly how far the gild was similar to modern combinations of wage-earners.

Now, the central figure of the gild organisation, in all instances, and at all periods of its development, was the master craftsman, owning the instruments of production, and selling the product. Opinions may differ as to the position of the journeymen in the gild or to the extent of the prevalence of servile labour outside it. Different views may be entertained as to the reality of that regard for the

[1] See his *Introduction to Economic History and Theory*, vol. i. (1891), vol. ii. (1893).

interests of the consumer which forms the ostensible object of many gild ordinances. But throughout the whole range of gild history the master craftsman, controlling the processes and selling the products of the labour of his little industrial group, was the practical administrator of and the dominant influence in, the gild system.[1] In short, the typical gild member was not wholly, or even chiefly, a manual worker. From the first he supplied not only whatever capital was needed in his industry, but also that knowledge of the markets for both raw material and product which is the special function of the *entrepreneur*. The economic functions and political authority of the gild rested, not upon its assumed inclusion of practically the whole body of manual workers, but upon the presence within it of the real directors of industry of the time. In the modern Trade Union, on the contrary, we find, not an association of *entrepreneurs*, themselves controlling the processes of their industry, and selling its products, but a combination of hired wage-workers, serving under the direction of industrial captains who are outside the organisation. The separation into distinct social classes of the capitalist and the brainworker on the one hand, and the manual workers on the other—the substitution, in fact, of a horizontal for a vertical cleavage of society—vitiates any treatment of the Trade Union, as the analogue of the Craft Gild.

On the other hand, to regard the typical Craft Gild as the predecessor of the modern Employers' Association or capitalist syndicate would, in our opinion, be as great a mistake as to believe, with Mr. George Howell, that it was the "early prototype" of the Trade Union. Dr. Brentano himself laid stress on the fact, since brought into special

[1] Dr. Brentano himself makes this clear. "We must not forget that these gilds were not unions of labourers in the present sense of the word, but of persons who, with the help of some stock, carried on their craft on their own account. The gild contests were, consequently, not contests for acquiring political equality for labour and property, but for the recognition of political equality of Trade Stock and real property in the towns." (*Gilds and Trade Unions*, p. 73.)

prominence by Dr. Cunningham, that the Craft Gild was looked upon as the representative of the interests, not of any one class alone, but of the three distinct and somewhat antagonistic elements of modern society, the capitalist *entrepreneur*, the manual worker, and the consumer at large. We do not need to discuss the soundness of the mediæval lack of faith in unfettered competition as a guarantee of the genuineness and good quality of wares. Nor are we concerned with their assumption of the identity of interest between all classes of the community. It seemed a matter of course to the statesman, no less than to the public, that the leading master craftsmen of the town should be entrusted with the power and the duty of seeing that neither themselves nor their competitors were permitted to lower the standard of production. "The Fundamental Ground," says the petition of the Carpenters' Company in 1681, "of Incorporating Handicraft Trades and Manual Occupations into distinct Companies was to the end that all Persons using such Trades should be brought into one Uniform Government and Corrected and Regulated by Expert and Skilful Governors, under certain Rules and Ordinances appointed to that purpose."[1] The leading men of the gild became, in effect, officers of the municipality, charged with the protection of the public from adulteration and fraud. When, therefore, we remember that the Craft Gild was assumed to represent, not only all the grades of producers in a particular industry, but also the consumers of the product, and the community at large, the impossibility of finding, in modern society, any single inheritor of its multifarious functions will become apparent. The powers and duties of the mediæval gild have, in fact, been broken up and dispersed. The friendly society and the Trade Union, the capitalist syndicate and the employers' association, the factory inspector and the Poor Law relieving officer, the school board visitor and the municipal officers who look after

[1] Jupp's *History of the Carpenters' Company*, p. 313 (London, second edition, 1848).

adulteration and inspect our weights and measures—all these persons and institutions might, with equal justice, be put forward as the successors of the Craft Gild.[1]

Although there is an essential difference in the composition of the two organisations, the popular theory of their resemblance is easily accounted for. First, there are the picturesque likenesses which Dr. Brentano discovered —the regulations for admission, the box with its three locks, the common meal, the titles of the officers, and so forth. But these are to be found in all kinds of association in England. The Trade Union organisations share them with the local friendly societies, or sick clubs, which have existed all over England for the last two centuries. Whether these features were originally derived from the Craft Gilds or not, it is practically certain that the early Trade Unions took them, in the vast majority of cases, not from the traditions of any fifteenth century organisation, but from the existing little friendly societies around them. In some cases the parentage of these forms and ceremonies might be ascribed with as much justice to the mystic rites of the Freemasons as to the ordinances of the Craft Gilds. The fantastic ritual peculiar to the Trade Unionism of 1829–34, which we shall describe in a subsequent chapter, was, as we shall see, taken from the ceremonies of the Friendly Society of Oddfellows. But we are informed that it bears traces of being an illiterate copy of a masonic ritual. In our own times the "Free Colliers of Scotland," an early attempt at a national miners' union, were organised into "Lodges" under a "Grand Master," with much of the terminology and some of the

[1] "The Trade Union of to-day is often spoken of as the lineal descendant of the ancient Craft Gilds. There is, however, no direct or indirect connection between the ancient and modern forms of trade combination. Beyond the fact that they each had for their objects the establishment of certain trade regulations, and the provision of certain similar benefits, they had nothing in common." "Trade Unions as a Means of Improving the Conditions of Labour," by Mr. John Burnett; published in *The Claims of Labour* (Edinburgh, 1886).

characteristic forms of Freemasonry. No one would, however, assert any essential resemblance between the village sick club and the trade society, still less between Freemasonry and Trade Unionism. The only common feature between all these is the spirit of association, clothing itself in more or less similar picturesque forms.

But other resemblances between the gild and the union brought out by Dr. Brentano are more to the point. The fundamental purpose of the Trade Union is the protection of the Standard of Life—that is to say, the organised resistance to any innovation likely to tend to the degradation of the wage-earners as a class. That some social organisation for the protection of the Standard of Life was necessary was a leading principle of the Craft Gild, as it was, in fact, of the whole mediæval order. "Our forefathers," wrote the Emperor Sigismund in 1434, "have not been fools. The crafts have been devised for this purpose: that everybody by them should earn his daily bread, and nobody shall interfere with the craft of another. By this the world gets rid of its misery, and every one may find his livelihood." [1] But in this respect the Trade Union does not so much resemble the Craft Gild, as preserve intact what was once the accepted principle of mediæval society, of which the gild policy was only one manifestation. We do not wish, in our historical survey of the Trade Union Movement, to enter into the far-reaching controversy as to the political validity either of the mediæval theory of the compulsory maintenance of the Standard of Life, or of such analogous modern expedients as Collective Bargaining on the one hand, or Factory Legislation on the other. Nor do we wish to imply that the mediæval theory was at any time so effectively and so sincerely carried out as really to secure to every manual worker a comfortable maintenance. We are concerned only with the historical fact that, as we shall see, the artisans of the eighteenth century sought to

[1] Goldasti's *Constitutiones Imperiales*, tom. iv. p. 189, quoted by Dr. Brentano, p. 60.

perpetuate those legal or customary regulations of their trade which, as they believed, protected their own interests. When these regulations fell into disuse the workers combined to secure their enforcement. When legal redress was denied, the operatives, in many instances, took the matter into their own hands, and endeavoured to maintain, by Trade Union regulations, what had once been prescribed by law. In this respect, and practically in this respect only, do we find any trace of the gild in the Trade Union.

Let us now turn from the hypothetical origin of Trade Unionism to the recorded facts. We have failed to discover, either in the innumerable trade pamphlets and broad-sheets of the time, or in the Journals of the House of Commons, any evidence of the existence, prior to 1700,[1]

[1] It is perhaps fair to mention here *The Case and Proposals of the Free Journeymen Printers in and about London* (1666), in which they complain of the multiplication of apprentices, and the prevalence of "turnovers"—grievances which have vexed every compositors' Trade Union down to the present day. This petition, preserved in the British Museum, is printed in Dr. Brentano's *Gilds and Trade Unions*, p. 97. But there is no evidence of any durable combination other than the old "chapel" for a hundred years after its date. Benjamin Franklin, who worked in London in 1725, makes no mention of Trade Unions. A pamphlet of 1669 also contains what appears at first sight to be a mention of Trade Unionism. "The general conspiracy amongst artificers and labourers is so apparent that within these twenty-five years the wages of joiners, bricklayers, carpenters, etc., are increased, I mean within 40 miles of London (against all reason and good government), from eighteen and twenty pence a day, to 2/6 and 3/-, and mere labourers from 10 and 12 pence a day unto 16 and 20 pence, and this not since the dreadful fire of London only, but some time before. A journeyman shoemaker has now in London (and proportionably in the country) 14 pence for making that pair of shoes, which within these 12 years he made for 10 pence. . . . Nor has the increase of wages amongst us been occasioned by quickness of trade and want of hands (as some do suppose) which are indeed justifiable reasons, but through an exacting humour and evil disposition in our people (like our Gravesend watermen, who by some temporary and mean pretences of the late Dutch war, have raised their ferry double to what it was, and finding the sweet thereof, keep it up still), that so they may live the better above their station, and work

of continuous associations of wage-earners for maintaining or improving the conditions of their employment. And when we remember that during the latter decades of the seventeenth century the employers of labour, and especially the industrial "companies" or corporations, memorialised the House of Commons on every conceivable grievance which affected their particular trade, the absence of all complaints of workmen's combinations suggests to us that no such combinations existed.[1] In the early years of the eighteenth century we find isolated complaints of combinations "lately entered into" by the skilled workers in certain trades. As the century progresses we watch the gradual multiplication of these complaints, met by counter-accusations presented by organised bodies of workmen. From the middle of the century the Journals of the House of Commons abound in petitions and counter-petitions revealing the existence of journeymen's associations in most of the skilled trades. And finally, we may infer the wide extension of the movement from the steady multiplication of the Acts against combinations in particular industries, and their culmination in the comprehensive statute of 1799 forbidding all combinations whatsoever.

If we examine the evidence of the rise of combinations in particular trades, we see the Trade Union springing, not from any particular institution, but from every opportunity for the meeting together of wage-earners of the

so much the fewer days by how much the more they exact in their wages." (*Usury at Six Per Cent. Examined*, by Thomas Manley, London, 1669.) But we cannot infer from this unique and ambiguous passage anything more than the possibility of ephemeral combinations. It is significant that Defoe, with all his detailed description of English industry in 1724, does not mention any combinations of workmen.

[1] In an able pamphlet dated 1681, entitled *The Trade of England Revived*, it is stated that "we cannot make our English cloth so cheap as they do in other countries, because of the strange idleness and stubbornness of our poor," who insist on excessive wages. But the author attributes this state of things, not to the existence of combinations, of which he seems never to have heard, but to the Poor Law and the prevalence of almsgiving.

same trade. Adam Smith remarked that "people of the same trade seldom meet together, even for merriment and diversion, but the conversation ends in a conspiracy against the public, or in some contrivance to raise prices."[1] And there is actual evidence of the rise of one of the oldest of the existing Trade Unions out of a gathering of the journeymen "to take a social pint of porter together."[2] More often it is a tumultuous strike, out of which grows a permanent organisation. Elsewhere, as we shall see, the workers meet to petition the House of Commons, and reassemble from time to time to carry on their agitation for the enactment of some new regulation, or the enforcement of an existing law. In other instances we shall find the journeymen of a particular trade frequenting certain public-houses, at which they hear of situations vacant, and the "house of call" becomes thus the nucleus of an organisation. Or we watch the journeymen in a particular trade declaring that "it has been an ancient custom in the kingdom of Great Britain for divers Artists to meet together and unite themselves in societies to promote Amity and true Christian Charity," and establishing a

[1] *Wealth of Nations*, bk. i. ch. x. p. 59 of McCulloch's edition, 1863. In an operative's description, dated 1809, of the gatherings of the Paisley weavers, we see the Trade Union in the making. "The Paisley operatives are of a free, communicative disposition. They are fond to inform one another in anything respecting trade, and in order to receive information in a collective capacity they have, for a long course of years, associated in a friendly manner in societies denominated clubs. . . . When met the first hour is devoted to reading the daily newspapers out aloud. . . . At nine o'clock the chairman calls silence; then the report of trade is heard. The chairman reports first what he knows or what he has heard of such a manufacturing house or houses, as wishing to engage operatives for such fabric or fabrics; likewise the price, the number of the yarn, &c. Then each reports as he is seated; so in the period of an hour not only the state of trade is known, but any difference that has taken place between manufacturers and operatives." (*An Answer to Mr. Carlile's Sketches of Paisley*, by William Taylor, Paisley, 1809, pp. 15–17.)

[2] See Dunning's account of the origin of the Consolidated Society of Bookbinders, in the Social Science Association's *Report on Trade Societies*, 1860, p. 93.

sick and funeral club, which invariably proceeds to discuss the rates of wages offered by the employers, and insensibly passes into a Trade Union with friendly benefits.[1] And if the trade is one in which the journeymen frequently travel in search of work, we note the slow elaboration of systematic arrangements for the relief of these "tramps" by their fellow-workers in each town through which they pass, and the inevitable passage of this far-extending tramping society into a national Trade Union.[2]

[1] *Articles of Agreement made and confirmed by a Society of Taylors, begun March* 25, 1760 (London, 1812). Local friendly societies giving sick pay and providing for funeral expenses had sprung up all over England during the eighteenth century. Towards its close their number seems to have rapidly increased until, in some parts at any rate, every village ale-house became a centre for one or more of these humble and spontaneous organisations. The rules of upwards of a hundred of these societies, dating between 1750 and 1820, and all centred round Newcastle-on-Tyne, are preserved in the British Museum. At Nottingham, in 1794, fifty-six of these clubs joined in the annual procession. (*Nottingham Journal*, June 14, 1794.) So long as they were composed indiscriminately of men of all trades, it is probable that no distinctively Trade Union action could arise from their meetings. But in some cases, for various reasons, such as high contributions, migratory habits, or the danger of the calling, the sick and burial club was confined to men of a particular trade. This kind of friendly society almost inevitably became a Trade Union. Some societies of this type can trace their existence for nearly a century and a half. The Glasgow coopers, for instance, have had a local trade friendly society, confined to journeymen coopers, ever since 1752. The London Sailmakers' Burial Society dates from 1740. The Newcastle shoemakers established a similar society as early as 1719. (*Observations upon the Report from the Select Committee of the House of Commons on the laws respecting Friendly Societies*, by the Rev. J. T. Becher, Prebendary of Southwell, 1826.) On the occurrence of any dispute with the employers their funds, as this contemporary observer in another pamphlet deplores, "have also too frequently been converted into engines of abuse by paying weekly sums to artisans out of work, and have thereby encouraged combinations among workmen not less injurious to the misguided members than to the Public Weal." (*Observations on the Rise and Progress of Friendly Societies*, 1824, p. 55.)

[2] Schanz (*Gesellenverbände*, p. 25) follows Brentano (p. 94) in attributing the formation of journeymen's fraternities in the Middle Ages mainly to a desire to provide for the wandering craftsmen. The contrast between the absence of such fraternities in England and their

All these, however, are but opportunities for the meeting of journeymen of the same trade. They do not explain the establishment of continuous organisations of the wage-earners in the eighteenth rather than in the fifteenth or seventeenth centuries. The essential cause of the growth of durable associations of wage-earners must lie in something peculiar to the century. This fundamental condition of Trade Unionism we discover in the economic revolution through which certain industries were passing. In all cases in which Trade Unions arose, the great bulk of the workers had ceased to be independent producers, themselves controlling the processes, and owning the materials and the product of their labour, and had passed into the condition of lifelong wage-earners, possessing neither the instruments of production nor the commodity in its finished state. "From the moment that to establish a given business more capital is required than a journeyman can easily accumulate

spread in Germany is, perhaps, to be ascribed in some measure to the fact that English journeymen seem never to have adopted the German custom of "wanderjahre," or regular habit of spending, on completing their apprenticeship, a few years in travelling about the country to complete their training. When the local privileges of the old gilds had fallen somewhat into abeyance, the restrictions of the successive Settlement Acts must in England, to some extent, have checked the mobility of labour. But, from the beginning of the eighteenth century at any rate, we find it customary for journeymen of certain trades to "tramp" from town to town in search of work, and the description subsequently quoted, of the organisations of the woolcombers and worsted weavers in 1741, shows that the relief of these travelling journeymen was a prominent object of the early unions. The compositors at the very beginning of the present century had already covered the country with a network of local clubs, the chief function of which appears to have been the facilitation of this wandering in search of work. And the calico-printers had a systematic way of issuing a ticket which entitled the tramp to collect from each journeyman, in any "print-field" that he visited, at first a voluntary contribution, and latterly a fixed relief of a halfpenny per head in England, and a penny per head in Scotland. (*Minutes of evidence taken before the Committee to whom the petition of the several journeymen Calico printers and others working in that trade, &c., was referred,* July 4, 1804, and the *Report* from that Committee, July 17, 1806.)

within a few years, guild mastership—the mastership of the masterpiece—becomes little more than a name. . . . Skill alone is valueless, and is soon compelled to hire itself out to capital. . . . Now begins the opposition of interest between employers and employed, now the latter begin to group themselves together; now rises the trade society." [1] Or, to express this Industrial Revolution in more abstract terms, we may say, in the words of Dr. Ingram, that "the whole modern organisation of labour in its advanced forms rests on a fundamental fact which has spontaneously and increasingly developed itself—namely, the definite separation between the functions of the capitalist and the workman, or, in other words, between the direction of industrial operations and their execution in detail." [2]

It is often assumed that the divorce of the manual worker from the ownership of the means of production resulted from the introduction of machinery and the factory system. Had this been the case we should not, upon our hypothesis, have expected to find Trade Unions at an earlier date than factories, or in industries untransformed by machinery. The fact that the earliest permanent combinations of wage-earners in England precede the factory system by half a century, and occur in trades carried on exclusively by hand labour, reminds us that the creation of a class of lifelong wage-servants came about in more than one way. Some of the crafts, for instance, lent themselves, more than others, to an advantageous division of labour. In tailoring for rich customers the master craftsmen appear at the very beginning of the eighteenth century to have been recruited from the comparatively small number of journeymen who acquired the specially skilled part of the business—namely, the cutting-out. "The tailor," says an eighteenth century manual

[1] Mr. J. M. Ludlow, in article in *Macmillan's Magazine*, February, 1861.

[2] *Work and the Workman*, by Dr. J. K. Ingram (Address to the Trade Union Congress at Dublin, 1880).

for the young tradesman, "ought to have a quick eye to steal the cut of a sleeve, the pattern of a flap, or the shape of a good trimming at a glance, . . . in the passing of a chariot, or in the space between the door and a coach." There grew up accordingly a class of mere sewers, "not one in ten" knowing "how to cut out a pair of breeches: they are employed only to sew the seam, to cast the buttonholes, and prepare the work for the finisher. . . . Generally as poor as rats, the House of Call runs away with all their earnings, and keeps them constantly in debt and want." [1]

This differentiation was promoted by the increasing need of capital for successfully beginning business in the better quarters of the metropolis. Already in 1681 the "shopkeeping tailor" was deplored as a new and objectionable feature, "for many remember when there were no new garments sold in London (in shops) as now there are." [2] The "accustomed tailor," or working craftsman, making up the customer's own cloth, objected to "taylers being salesmen," paying high rents for shops in fashionable neighbourhoods, giving long credit to their aristocratic clients, and each employing, in his own workshops, dozens or even scores of journeymen, who were recruited from the houses of call in times of pressure, and ruthlessly turned adrift when the season was over. And although it remained possible in the reign of Queen Anne, as it still is in that of Victoria, to start business in a back street as an independent master tailor with no more capital or skill than the average journeyman could command, yet the making of the fine clothes worn by the Court and the gentry demanded, then as now, a capital and a skill which put this extensive and lucrative trade altogether out of the reach of the thousands of journeymen whom it employed. Thus we find that at the beginning of the eighteenth century the typical journeyman tailor in London and Westminster had become a lifelong wage-earner

[1] *The London Tradesman*, by Campbell (London, 1747), p. 192.
[2] *The Trade of England Revived* (London, 1681), p. 36.

It is not surprising, therefore, that one of the earliest instances of permanent Trade Unionism that we have been able to discover occurs in this trade. The master tailors in 1720 complain to Parliament that "the Journeymen Taylors in and about the Cities of London and Westminster, to the number of seven thousand and upwards, have lately entred into a combination to raise their wages and leave off working an hour sooner than they used to do; and for the better carrying on their design have subscribed their respective names in books prepared for that purpose, at the several houses of call or resort (being publick-houses in and about London and Westminster) where they use; and collect several considerable sums of money to defend any prosecutions against them."[1] Parliament listened to the masters' complaint, and passed the Act 7, Geo. I. st. 1, c. 13, restraining both the giving and the taking of wages in excess of a stated maximum, all combinations being prohibited. From that time forth the journeymen tailors of London and Westminster have remained in effective though sometimes informal combination, the organisation centring round the fifteen or twenty "houses of call." In 1744 the Privy Council was set in motion against their refusal to obey the Act of 1720.[2] In 1767 further legislation was, in spite of their eloquent protests, obtained against them. In 1810 a master declared before a Select Committee that their combination had existed for over a century.[3]

[1] House of Commons Journals, vol. xix. pp. 416, 424, 481; *The Case of the Master Taylors residing within the Cities of London and Westminster, in relation to the great abuses committed by their journeymen; An Abstract of the Master Taylors' Bill before the Honourable House of Commons, with the Journeymen's Observation on each clause of the said Bill; The Case of the Journeymen Taylors residing in the Cities of London and Westminster* (all 1720).

[2] *London*, by David Hughson (London, 1821), pp. 392–3; House of Commons Journals, vol. xxiv. Place MSS. 27799, pp. 4, 5. *The Case of the Journeymen Taylors in and about the Cities of London and Westminster* (January 7, 1745).

[3] Place MSS. 27799–10.

An equally early instance of permanent trade combination is the woollen manufacture of the West of England. Here the rise of a class of lifelong wage-earners took a form altogether different from that in the London tailoring trade, but it produced the same result of combinations among the workers. The "wealthy clothiers" of Somerset, Gloucestershire, and Devon, who during the sixteenth century had "mightily increased in fame and riches, their houses frequented like kings' courts,"[1] provided and owned the material of the industry throughout the whole manufacturing process, but employed a separate class of operatives at each stage. Buying the wool at one of the market towns, the capitalist clothier gave this to one set of hand-workers to be carded and spun into yarn in the village households. The yarn was passed on to another set—the hand-loom weavers—to be made into cloth in their cottages. The cloth was then "fulled" at the capitalist's own mill (usually a water-mill) and again given out to be "dressed" by a new set of hand-workers, after which it was ready to be packed in the warehouse, and despatched to Bristol or London for shipment or sale. In this case, as in that of the tailors, the operatives still retained the ownership of the tools of their particular processes, but it was practically impossible for them to acquire either the capital or the commercial knowledge necessary for the success of so highly organised an industry, and we accordingly find them, as Dr. Brentano describes, entering into extensive combinations from the very beginning of the eighteenth century. In the year 1717, for instance, the journals of the House of Commons contain evidence of the existence of a widespread combination of the woollen-workers in Devonshire and Somersetshire. The Mayor and Corporation of Bradninch complain "that for some years last past the woolcombers and

[1] *A Declaration of the Estate of Clothing now used within this Realme of England*, by John May, Deputy Alnager (London, 1613, 51 pp.), in B.M. 712, g. 16, a volume which contains many interesting pamphlets on the woollen manufacture between 1613 and 1753.

weavers in those parts have been confederating how to incorporate themselves into a club: and have to the number of some thousands in this county, in a very riotous and tumultuous manner, exacted tribute from many."[1] The House of Commons apparently thought the evil could be met by Royal Authority and requested the King to issue a Proclamation. Accordingly on February 4, 1718, a Royal Proclamation was issued against these "lawless clubs and societies which had illegally presumed to use a common seal, and to act as Bodies Corporate, by making and unlawfully conspiring to execute certain By-laws or Orders, whereby they pretend to determine who had a right to the Trade, what and how many Apprentices and Journeymen each man should keep at once, together with the prices of all their manufactures, and the manner and materials of which they should be wrought."[2] This kingly fulmination, which was read at the Royal Exchange, failed to effect its purpose, for the Journals of the House of Commons for 1723 and 1725 contain frequent complaints of the continuance of the combinations,[3] which are constantly heard of throughout the whole of the eighteenth century, dying away only on the supersession of the male by the female weaver at the beginning of the present century.

This early development of trade combinations in the West of England stands in striking contrast with their absence in the same industry where pursued, as in York-

[1] House of Commons Journals, vol. xviii. p. 715, February 5, 1717. Tiverton and Exeter petition to the same effect.

[2] Hughson's *London*, p. 337. The proclamation was reprinted in *Notes and Queries*, September 21, 1867, from a copy preserved by the Sun Fire Office.

[3] See the petitions from Exeter and Dartmouth, February 24, 1723, vol. xx. pp. 268–9; and those from Taunton, Tiverton, Exeter, and Bristol, March 3 and 7, 1725, vol. xx. pp. 598, 602, 648. In 1729 the Bristol weavers, "while the corporation was at church," riotously attacked the house of an obnoxious employer, and had to be repulsed by the troops. (*History of Bristol*, p. 261, by J. Evans, Bristol, 1824.)

shire, on the so-called "Domestic System." The Yorkshire weaver was a small master craftsman of the old type, himself buying and owning the raw material, and once or twice a week selling his cloth in the markets of Leeds or Wakefield, to which, we are told by Defoe in 1724, "few clothiers bring more than one piece." "Almost at every house," he writes of the country near Halifax, "there was a Tenter, and almost on every Tenter a piece of cloth, or kersey, or shalloon, . . . at every considerable house was a manufactory; . . . then, as every clothier must keep a horse, perhaps two, to fetch and carry for the use of his manufacture, viz., to fetch home his wool and his provisions from the market, to carry his yarn to the spinners, his manufacture to the fulling mill, and when finished, to the market to be sold, and the like; so every manufacturer generally keeps a cow or two or more, for his family, and this employs the two or three or four pieces of enclosed land about his house, for they scarce sow corn enough for their cocks and hens." [1] Not until the Yorkshire cloth dealers began, about 1794, to establish factories on a large scale do we find any Trade Unions, and then journeymen and small masters struggled with one accord to resist the new form of capitalist industry which was beginning to deprive them of their control over the product of their labour.

The worsted industry appears everywhere to have been carried on rather like the woollen manufactures of the West of England than the same industry in Yorkshire. The woolcomber frequently owned the inexpensive hand-combs and pots with which he worked. But the woolcombers, like the weavers of the West of England, formed but one of several classes of workers, for whose employment both capital and commercial knowledge was

[1] Defoe's *Tour*, vol. iii. pp. 97–101, 116 (London, 1724). John Bright mentions his father's apprenticeship, about 1789, to "a most worthy man who had a few acres of ground, a very small farm, and three or four looms in his house." (Speech reported in *Beehive*, February 2, 1867.)

indispensable. And so already in 1741 it was remarked that the woolcombers had "for a number of years past erected themselves into a sort of corporation (though without a charter); their first pretence was to take care of their poor brethren that should fall sick, or be out of work; and this was done by meeting once or twice a week, and each of them contributing 2d. or 3d. towards the box to make a bank, and when they became a little formidable they gave laws to their masters, as also to themselves—viz., That no man should comb wool under 2s. per dozen; that no master should employ any comber that was not of their club: if he did they agreed one and all not to work for him; and if he had employed twenty they all of them turned out, and oftentimes were not satisfied with that, but would abuse the honest man that would labour, and in a riotous manner beat him, break his comb-pots, and destroy his working tools; they further support one another in so much that they are become one society throughout the kingdom. And that they may keep up their price to encourage idleness rather than labour, if any one of their club is out of work, they give him a ticket and money to seek for work at the next town where a box club is, where he is also subsisted, suffered to live a certain time with them, and then used as before; by which means he can travel the kingdom round, be caressed at each club, and not spend a farthing of his own or strike one stroke of work. This hath been imitated by the weavers also, though not carried through the kingdom, but confined to the places where they work."[1] The surviving members of the Old Amicable Society of Woolstaplers retain a tradition of local trade clubs dating from the very beginning of the eighteenth century, and of their forming a federal union in 1785. Old members of the United Journeymen Curriers' Society have seen circulars and tramping cards, showing

[1] *A Short Essay upon Trade in General*, by "A Lover of his Country" (London, 1741), quoted in James' *History of the Worsted Manufacture in England*, p. 232.

that a similar tramping federation existed in their trade from the middle of the century.[1]

In other cases the expensive nature of the raw material or the tools aided the creation of a separate class. The Spitalfields silk-weavers, whom we find forming a permanent organisation in 1773, could never have owned the costly silks they wove.[2] The gold-beaters, whose union dates at any rate from 1777, were similarly debarred from owning the material.

Another remarkable instance of combination prior to the introduction of mechanical power and the factory system is that of the hosiery workers, or framework knitters, described by Dr. Brentano. From the very beginning of the use of the stocking-frame, in the early part of the seventeenth century, servants appear to have been set to work upon frames owned by capitalists, though the bulk of the trade was in the hands of men who worked upon their own frames as independent producers. The competition of these embryo factories was severely felt by the domestic framework knitter, and on the final breakdown, in 1753, of the legal limitation of apprentices, it became disastrous. There grew up a "ruinous practice of parishes giving premiums to manufacturers for employing their poor," and this flooding of the labour market with subsidised child labour reduced the typical framework knitter to a state of destitution. Though he continued to work in his cottage, he rapidly lost the ownership of his frame, and a system arose under which the frames were hired at a rent, either from a small capitalist frame-owner, or from the manufacturer by whom the work was given out. The operative was thus deprived, not only of the ownership of the product, but also

[1] See, in corroboration, *Leicester Herald*, August 24, 1793; *Morning Chronicle*, October 13, 1824; Place MSS., 27801—246, 247.

[2] The Dublin silk-weavers, owing perhaps to their having been largely Huguenot refugees in a Roman Catholic town, appear to have been associated from the early part of the century; see, for instance, *The Case of the Silk and Worsted Weavers in a Letter to a Member of Parliament* (Dublin, 1749, 8 pp.).

the instruments of his labour. Hence, although from the very beginning of the eighteenth century there were ephemeral combinations among the framework knitters, in which masters and men often joined, it was not until 1780, when the renting of frames had become general, that a durable Trade Union of wage-earners arose.[1]

The development of the industrial organisation of the cutlery trades affords another example of this evolution. At the date of the establishment of the Cutlers' Company (1624) the typical craftsman was himself the owner of his "wheel" and other instruments, and a strict limitation of apprentices was maintained. By 1791, when the masters obtained from Parliament a relaxation in the customary restrictions as to apprentices, we find this system largely replaced by something very like the present order of things, in which the typical Sheffield operative works with material given out by the manufacturer, upon wheels rented either from the latter or from a landlord supplying power. It is no mere coincidence that in the year 1790 the Sheffield employers found themselves obliged to take concerted action against the "scissor-grinders and other workmen who have entered into unlawful combinations to raise the price of labour." [2]

But the cardinal example of the connection of Trade Unionism with the divorce of the worker from the instruments of production is seen in the rapid rise of trade combinations on the introduction of the factory system.

[1] The condition of the framework knitters may be gathered from the elaborate Parliamentary Enquiry, the proceedings of which fill fifteen pages of the Journals of the House of Commons, vol. xxvi. April, 19, 1753. See also vols. xxxvi. and xxxvii., and the Report from the Committee on Framework Knitters' Petitions, 1812. Felkin's *History of the Machine-wrought Hosiery and Lace Manufactures* (London, 1867) contains an exhaustive account of the trade, founded on Gravener Henson's *History of the Framework Knitters* (London, 1831), now a scarce work, of which only one volume was published.

[2] *Sheffield Iris*, August 7 and September 9, 1790. The Scissor-smiths' Friendly Society, cited by Dr. Brentano, was established in April, 1791. Other trade friendly societies in Sheffield appear to date from a much earlier period.

We have already noticed that Trade Unions in Yorkshire began with the erection of factories and the use of power. When, in 1794, the clothiers of the West Riding failed to prevent the Leeds merchants from establishing large factories, "wherein it is intended to employ a great number of persons now working at their own homes," the journeymen took the matter into their own hands, and founded "the Clothiers' Community," or "Brief Institution," professedly to gather "briefs" or levies for the relief of the sick, and to carry on a Parliamentary agitation for hampering the factory owners by a legal limitation of apprentices. "It appears," reports the Parliamentary Committee of 1806, "that there has existed for some time an institution or society among the woollen manufacturers, consisting chiefly of clothworkers. In each of the principal manufacturing towns there appears to be a society, composed of deputies chosen from the several shops of workmen, from each of which town societies one or more deputies are chosen to form what is called the central committee, which meets, as occasion requires, at some place suitable to the local convenience of all parties. The powers of the central committee appear to pervade the whole institution; and any determination or measure which it may adopt may be communicated with ease throughout the whole body of manufacturers. Every workman, on his becoming a member of the society, receives a certain card or ticket, on which is an emblematical engraving—the same, the Committee are assured, both in the North and the West of England—that by producing his ticket he may at once show he belongs to the society. The same rules and regulations appear to be in force throughout the whole district, and there is the utmost reason to believe that no clothworker would be suffered to carry on his trade, otherwise than in solitude, who should refuse to submit to the obligations and rules of the society." [1] The transformation of cotton-spinning into a factory industry, which took place about 1780, was

[1] *Report of Committee on the Woollen Manufacture*, 1806, p. 16.

equally accompanied by the growth of Trade Unionism. The so-called benefit clubs of the Oldham operatives in 1792, and those of Stockport in 1796, were the forerunners of that network of spinners' societies throughout the northern counties and Scotland, which rose into notoriety in the great strikes of the next thirty years.[1]

It is easy to understand how the massing together in factories of regiments of men all engaged in the same trade, facilitated and promoted the formation of journeymen's trade societies. But with the cotton-spinners, as with the tailors, the rise of permanent trade combinations is to be ascribed, in a final analysis, to the definite separation between the functions of the capitalist *entrepreneur* and the manual worker, between, that is to say, the direction of industrial operations and their execution. It has, indeed, become a commonplace of modern Trade Unionism that only in those industries in which the worker has ceased to be concerned in the profits of buying and selling—that inseparable characteristic of the ownership of the means of production—can effective and stable trade organisations be established.

The positive proofs of this historical dependence of Trade Unionism upon the divorce of the worker from the ownership of the means of production are complemented by the absence of any permanent trade combinations in industries in which the divorce had not taken place. The degradation of the Standard of Life of the skilled manual worker on the break-up of the mediæval system occurred in all sorts of trades, whether the operative retained his ownership of the means of production or not, but Trade Unionism followed only where the change took the form of a divorce between capital and labour. The Corporation of Pinmakers of London are found petitioning Parliament towards the end of the seventeenth century or beginning of the eighteenth, as follows :—

"This company consists for the most part of poor and indigent people, who have neither credit nor mony to pur-

[1] See Chapter III.

chase wyre of the merchant at the best hand, but are forced for want thereof to buy only small parcels of the second or third buyer as they have occasion to use it, and to sell off the pins they make of the same from week to week, as soon as they are made, for ready money to feed themselves, their wives and children, whom they are constrained to imploy to go up and down every Saturday night from shop to shop to offer their pins to sale, otherwise cannot have money to buy bread. And these are daily so exceedingly multiplyed and encreased by reason of the unlimited number of apprentices that some few covetous-minded members of the company (who have considerable stocks) do constantly imploy and keep. . . . The persons that buy the pins from the maker to sell again to other retailing shopkeepers, taking advantage of this necessity of the poor workman (who are always forced to sell for ready mony, or otherwise cannot subsist), have by degrees so beaten down the price of pins that the workman is not able to live of his work, . . . and betake themselves to be porters, tankard bearers, and other day labourers, . . . and many of their children do daily become parish charges." [1] And the glovers complain at the same period that "they are generally so poor that they are supplied with leather upon credit, not being able to pay for that or their workfolk's wages till they have sold the gloves." [2]

Now, although these pinmakers and glovers, and other trades in like condition, fully recognised the need for some protection of their Standard of Life, we do not find any trace of Trade Unionism among them. Selling as they did, not their labour alone, but also its product, their only resource was legislative protection of the price of their wares.[3] In short, in those industries in which the cleavage

[1] In volume entitled *Tracts relating to Trade*, in British Museum, 816. m. 13.

[2] *Reasons against the designed leather impositions on gloves*, B. M. 816. m. 13.

[3] We shall have occasion later to refer to the absence of effective Trade Unionism in those trades which are still carried on by small working masters.

between capitalist and artisan, brain worker and manual labourer, was not yet complete, the old gild policy of commercial monopoly was resorted to as the only expedient for protecting the Standard of Life of the producer.

We do not contend that the divorce supplies, in itself, a complete explanation of the origin of Trade Unions. At all times in the history of English industry there have existed large classes of workers as much debarred from becoming the directors of their own industry as the eighteenth century tailor or woolcomber, or as the modern cotton-spinner or miner. Besides the semi-servile workers on the land or in the mines, it is certain that there were in the towns a considerable class of unskilled labourers excluded, through lack of apprenticeship, from any participation in the protective regulations of the gild.[1] By the eighteenth century, at any rate, the numbers of this class must have been largely swollen, by the increased demand for common labour involved in the growth of the transport trade, the extensive building operations, &c. But it is not among the farm servants, miners, or general labourers, ill-paid and ill-treated as these often were, that the early Trade Unions arose. We do not even hear of strikes or ephemeral combinations among them. The formation of independent associations to resist the will of employers requires the possession of a certain degree of personal independence and strength of character. Thus we find the earliest Trade Unions arising among journeymen whose skill and Standard of Life had been for centuries encouraged and protected by legal or customary regulations as to apprenticeship, and by the

[1] The assumption frequently made that the Craft Gilds, at their best period, included practically the whole working population, appears to us unfounded. The gild system at no time extended to any but the skilled handicraftsmen, alongside of whom must always have worked a large number of unapprenticed labourers, who received less than half the wages of the craftsmen. We venture to suggest that it is doubtful whether the Craft Gilds at any time numbered a larger proportion of the working population than the Trade Unions of the present day.

limitation of their numbers which the high premiums and other conditions must have involved. It is often assumed that Trade Unionism arose as a protest against intolerable industrial oppression. This was not so. The first half of the eighteenth century was certainly not a period of exceptional distress. For fifty years from 1710 there was an almost constant succession of good harvests, the price of wheat remaining unusually low. The tailors of London and Westminster united, at the very beginning of the eighteenth century, not to resist any reduction of their customary earnings, but to wring from their employers better wages and shorter hours of labour. The few survivors of the hand woolcombers still cherish the tradition of the eighteenth century, when they styled themselves "gentlemen woolcombers," refused to drink with other operatives, and were strong enough, as we have seen, to give "laws to their masters." [1] And the curriers, hatters, woolstaplers, brushmakers, basketmakers, and calico-printers, who furnish prominent instances of eighteenth century Trade Unionism, all earned relatively high wages, and long maintained a very effectual resistance to the encroachments of their employers.

It appears to us from these facts that Trade Unionism would have been a feature of English industry, even without the steam-engine and the factory system. Whether the association of superior workmen which arose in the early part of the century would, in such an event, ever have developed into a Trade Union Movement, is another matter. The typical "trade club" of the town artisan of this time was an isolated "ring" of highly skilled journeymen, who were even more decisively marked off from the mass of the manual workers than from the small class of capitalist employers. The customary enforcement of the apprenticeship prescribed by the Elizabethan

[1] Many instances of insolence and aggression by the woolcombers are on record; the employers' advertisements in the *Nottingham Journal*, August 31, 1795, and the *Leicester Herald* of June, 1792, are only two out of many similar recitals.

statutes, and the high premiums usually exacted from parents, long maintained a virtual monopoly of the better paid handicrafts in the hands of an almost hereditary caste of "tradesmen" in whose ranks the employers themselves had for the most part served their apprenticeship. Enjoying, as they did, this legal or customary protection, they found their trade clubs of use mainly for the provision of friendly benefits, and for "higgling" with their masters for better terms. We find no trace among such trade clubs of that sense of solidarity between the manual workers of different trades, which afterwards became so marked a feature of the Trade Union Movement. Their occasional disputes with their employers resembled rather family differences than conflicts between distinct social classes. They exhibit more tendency to "stand in" with their masters against the community, or to back them against rivals or interlopers, than to join their fellow-workers of other trades in an attack upon the capitalist class. In short, we have industrial society still divided vertically trade by trade, instead of horizontally between employers and wage-earners. This latter cleavage it is which has transformed the Trade Unionism of petty groups of skilled workmen into the modern Trade Union Movement.[1]

The pioneers of the Trade Union Movement were not the trade clubs of the town artisans, but the extensive

[1] That such clubs were common in the handicraft trades in London as early as 1720 appears from the following extract from *The Case of the Master Taylors residing within the Cities of London and Westminster*, a petition which led to the Act of 1720 :—"This combination of the Journeymen Taylors . . . is of very ill example to Journeymen in all other trades; as is sufficiently seen in the Journeymen Curriers, Smiths, Farriers, Sailmakers, Coachmakers, and artificers of divers other arts and mysteries, who have actually entered into Confederacies of the like nature; and the Journeymen Carpenters, Bricklayers, and Joyners have taken some steps for that purpose, and only wait to see the event of others." And the Journeymen Tailors in their petition of 1745 allude to the large number of "Monthly Clubs" among the London handicraftsmen. With regard to the curriers at this date, see Place MSS. 27801—246, 247.

combinations of the West of England woollen-workers and the Midland framework knitters. It was these associations that initiated what afterwards became the common purpose of nearly all eighteenth century combinations—the appeal to the Government and the House of Commons to save the wage-earners from the new policy of buying labour, like the raw material of manufacture, in the cheapest market. The rapidly changing processes and widening markets of English industry seemed to demand the sweeping away of all restrictions on the supply and employment of labour, a process which involved the levelling of all classes of wage-earners to their "natural wages." The first to feel the encroachment on their customary earnings were the woollen-workers employed by the capitalist clothiers of the Western counties. As the century advances we find trade after trade taking up the agitation against the new conditions, and such old established clubs as the hatters and the woolcombers joining the general movement as soon as their own industries are menaced. To the skilled craftsman in the towns the new policy was brought home by the repeal of the regulations which protected his trade against an influx of pauper labour. His defence was to ask for the enforcement of the law relating to apprenticeship.[1] This would not have helped the operative in the staple textile industries. To him the new order took the form of constantly declining piecework rates. What he demanded, therefore, was the fixing of the "convenient proportion of wages" contemplated by Elizabethan legislation. But, whether craftsmen or factory operatives, the wage-earners turned, for the maintenance of their Standard of Life, to that protection by the law upon which they had been taught to rely. So long as each section of workers believed in the intention of the governing class to protect their trade from the

[1] So much is this the case that Dr. Brentano asserts that "Trade Unions originated with the non-observance of" the Elizabethan Statute of Apprentices (p. 104), and that their primary object was, in all cases, the enforcement of the law on the subject.

results of unrestricted competition no community of interest arose. It was a change of industrial policy on the part of the Government that brought all trades into line, and for the first time produced what can properly be called a Trade Union Movement. In order, therefore, to make this movement fully intelligible, we must now retrace our steps, and follow the political history of industry in the eighteenth century.

The dominant industrial policy of the sixteenth century was the establishment of some regulating authority to perform, for the trade of the time, the services formerly rendered by the Craft Gilds. When, for instance, in the middle of the century the weavers found their customary earnings dwindling, they managed so far to combine as to make their voice heard at Westminster. In 1555 we find them complaining "that the rich and wealthy clothiers do many ways oppress them" by putting unapprenticed men to work on the capitalists' own looms, by letting out looms at rents, and "some also by giving much less wages and hire for the weaving and workmanship of clothes than in times past they did."[1] To the Parliament of these days it seemed right and natural that the oppressed wage-earners should turn to the legislature to protect them against the cutting down of their earnings by the competing capitalists. The statutes of 1552 and 1555 forbid the use of the gig-mill, restrict the number of looms that one person may own to two in towns and one in the country, and absolutely prohibit the letting-out of looms for hire or rent. In 1563, indeed, Parliament expressly charged itself with securing to all wage-earners a "convenient" livelihood. The old laws fixing a maximum wage could not, in face of the enormous rise of prices, be put in force "without the great grief and burden of the poor labourer and hired man." Circumstances were changing too fast for any

[1] Preamble to "An Act touching Weavers" (2 and 3 Philip and Mary, c. xi.); see Froude's *History of England*, vol. i. pp. 57–9; and W. C. Taylor's *Modern Factory System*, pp. 53–5.

rigid rule. But by the celebrated "Statute of Apprentices" the statesmen of the time contrived arrangements which would, as they hoped, "yield unto the hired person, both in the time of scarcity and in the time of plenty, a convenient proportion of wages." Every year the justices of each locality were to meet, "and calling unto them such discreet and grave persons . . . as they shall think meet, and conferring together respecting the plenty or scarcity of the time," were to fix the wages of practically every kind of labour,[1] their decisions being enforceable by heavy penalties. Stringent regulations as to the necessity of apprenticeship, the length of its term, and the number of apprentices to be taken by each employer, received the confirmation of law. The typical ordinances of the mediæval gild were, in fact, enacted in minute detail in a comprehensive general statute applying to the greater part of the industry of the period.

We need not discuss the very debatable question whether this celebrated law was or was not advantageous to the labouring folk of the time, or whether and to what extent its provisions were actually put in force.[2] But codifying and enacting as it did the fundamental principles of the mediæval social order, we can scarcely be surprised that its adoption by Parliament confirmed the working man in the once universal belief in the essential justice and good policy securing by appropriate legislation "the getting of a competent livelihood" by all those concerned in trade.[3] Exactly the same view pre-

[1] As expanded by 1 James I. c. 6, and 16 Car. I. c. 4; see R. *v.* Justices of Kent, 14 East, 395.

[2] See on these points, Dr. Cunningham's *History of English Industry and Commerce*, Mr. Hewins' *English Trade and Finance chiefly in the 17th Century*, and Thorold Rogers' *History of Agriculture and Prices*, vol. v. pp. 625–6, &c. Adam Smith observes that the fixing of wages had, in 1776, "gone entirely into disuse" (*Wealth of Nations*, bk. i. ch. x. p. 65).

[3] This forms the constant refrain of the numerous broadsheets or *Tracts relating to Trade* of 1688–1750, which are preserved in the British Museum, the Guildhall Library, and in Professor Foxwell's library.

vailed at the beginning of the eighteenth century. We again find the newly established associations of the operatives appealing to the King, to the House of Commons, or to Quarter Sessions against the beating down of their wages by their employers. For the first half of the century the governing classes continued to act on the assumption that the industrious mechanic had a right to the customary earnings of his trade. Thus in 1726 the weavers of Wilts and Somerset combine to petition the King against the harshness and fraud of their employers the clothiers, with the result that a Committee of the Privy Council investigates their grievances, and draws up "Articles of Agreement" for the settlement of the matters in dispute,[1] admonishing the weavers "for the future" not to attempt to help themselves by unlawful combinations, but always "to lay their grievances in a regular way before His Majesty, who would be always ready to grant them relief suitable to the justice of their case."[2] More often the operatives appealed to the House of Commons. In 1719 the "broad and narrow weavers" of Stroud and places round, petitioned Parliament to put down the tyrannical capitalist clothiers by enforcing the "Act touching Weavers" of 1555.[3] In 1728 the Gloucestershire operatives appealed to the local justices of the peace, and induced them, in spite of protests from the master clothiers, and apparently for the first time, to fix a liberal scale of wages for the weavers of the country.[4] Twenty years later the operatives obtained from Parliament a special prohibition of truck.[5] Finally, in 1756 they

[1] Privy Council Minutes of 1726, p. 310 (unpublished); see also House of Commons Journals, vol. xx. p. 745 (February 20, 1726).

[2] Privy Council Minutes, February 4, 1726.

[3] House of Commons Journals, vol. xix. p. 181 (December 5, 1719).

[4] Petition of "Several weavers of Woollen Broad cloth on behalf of themselves and several thousands of the Fraternity of Woollen Broadcloth Weavers" (House of Commons Journals, vol. xxvii. p. 503; see also pp. 730–2).

[5] 22 Geo. II. c. 27.

persuaded the House of Commons to pass an Act[1] providing for the fixing of piecework prices by the justices, in order that the practice of cutting down rates and underselling might be stopped. "A Table or Scheme for Rates of Wages" was accordingly settled at Quarter Sessions, November 6, 1756, with which the operatives were fairly contented.[2]

The next few years saw a revolutionary change in the industrial policy of the legislature which must have utterly bewildered the operatives. Within a generation the House of Commons exchanged its policy of mediæval protection for one of "Administrative Nihilism." The Woollen Cloth Weavers' Act of 1756 had not been one year in force when Parliament was assailed by numerous petitions and counter petitions. The employers declared that the rates fixed by the justices were, in face of the growing competition of Yorkshire, absolutely impracticable. The operatives, on the other hand, asked that the Act might be strengthened in their favour. The clothiers asserted the advantages of freedom of contract and unrestrained competition. The weavers received the support of the landowners and gentry in claiming the maintenance by law of their customary earnings. The perplexed House of Commons wavered between the two. At first a bill was ordered to be drawn strengthening the existing law; but ultimately the clothiers were held to have proved their case.[3] The Act of 1756 was unconditionally repealed; and Parliament was now heading straight for *laisser-faire*.

The struggle over this Woollen Cloth Weavers' Act of 1756 marks the passage from the old ideas to the new. When, in 1776, the weavers, spinners, scribblers, and other woollen operatives of Somerset petitioned against

[1] 29 Geo. II. c. 33.

[2] *Report of Committee on Petitions of West of England Clothiers*, House of Commons Journals, vol. xxvii. pp. 730–2.

[3] For all these proceedings, see House of Commons Journals, vol. xxvii.

the evil that was being done to their accustomed livelihood by the introduction of the spinning-jenny into Shepton Mallet, the House of Commons, which had two centuries before absolutely prohibited the gig-mill, refused even to allow the petition to be received.[1]

The change of policy had already affected another trade. The London Framework Knitters' Company, which had been incorporated in 1663 for the express purpose of regulating the trade, found itself during the first half of the eighteenth century in continual conflict with recalcitrant masters who set its bye-laws at defiance. This long struggle, in which the journeymen took vigorous action in support of the Company, was brought to an end in 1753 by an exhaustive Parliamentary inquiry. The bye-laws of the Company, upon the enforcement of which the journeymen had rested all their hopes, were solemnly declared to be "injurious and vexatious to the manufacturers," whilst the Company's authority was pronounced to be "hurtful to the trade."[2] The total abandonment of all legal regulation of the trade led, after numerous transitory revolts, to the establishment in 1778 of "The Stocking Makers' Association for the Mutual Protection in the Midland Counties of England," having for its objects the limitation of apprentices, and the enactment of a fixed rate of wages. Dr. Brentano has summarised the various attempts made by the operatives during the next two years to secure the protection of the legislature.[3] Through the influence of their Union a sympathetic member was returned for the borough of Nottingham. Investigation by a committee brought to light a degree of "sweating" scarcely paralleled even by the worst modern instances. A Bill for the fixing of

[1] House of Commons Journals, vol. xxxvi. p. 7 (November 1, 1776).

[2] House of Commons Journals, April 13 and 19, 1753, vol. xxvi. pp. 764, 779; Felkin's *History of the Machine-wrought Hosiery and Lace Manufacture*, p. 80; Cunningham, *Growth of English Industry and Commerce*, vol. ii. p. 347.

[3] *Gilds and Trade Unions*, pp. 115–21.

wages had actually passed its second reading when the employers, whipping up all their friends in the House, defeated it on the third reading—a rebuff to the workmen which led to serious riots at Nottingham, and thrust the unfortunate framework knitters back into despairing poverty.[1]

By this time the town craftsmen were also beginning to be menaced by the revolutionary proposals of their employers. The hatters, for example, had hitherto been protected by the strict limitation of the number of apprentices prescribed by the Acts of 1566 and 1603, and enforced by the Feltmakers' Company. This legal protection had not prevented the journeymen from forming, about 1771, a national federation of the trade clubs of the principal towns strong enough to obtain, in 1775, an increased rate of wages, and generally to insist on the exclusive employment of club men. We know little of this society except that it held periodical "congresses," at which the representatives of the different districts regulated the relief of "tramps" throughout the country; made bye-laws for the trade; and, in 1777 at any rate, raised a regular contribution of 2d. per week per member. We gather from the employers' complaints that the main preoccupation of the federation was the strict enforcement of the law limiting the number of apprentices which each master might take. This caused the leading master hatters to promote, in 1777, a Bill to remove the limitation. Against them was marshalled the whole strength of the journeymen's organisation. Petitions poured in from London, Burton, Bristol, Chester, Liverpool, Hexham, Derby, and other places, the "piecemaster hat or felt makers and finishers" usually joining with the journeymen against the demand of the capitalist employers. The men asserted that, even with the limitation, "except at brisk times many hundreds are obliged to go travelling up and down the kingdom in search of employ." But the House was impressed with the evidence and argu-

[1] House of Commons Journals, vols. xxxvi. and xxxvii.

ments of the large employers, and their Bill passed into law.[1]

The action of the House of Commons on occasions like these was not as yet influenced by any conscious theory of freedom of contract. What happened was that, as each trade in turn felt the effect of the new capitalist competition, the journeymen, and often also the smaller employers, would petition for redress, usually demanding the prohibition of the new machines, the enforcement of a seven years' apprenticeship, or the maintenance of the old limitation of the number of boys to be taught by each employer. The House would as a rule appoint a Committee to investigate the complaint, with the full intention of redressing the alleged grievance. But the large employers would produce before that Committee an overwhelming array of evidence proving that without the new machinery the growing export trade must be arrested; that the new processes could be learnt in a few months instead of seven years; and that the restriction of the old master-craftsmen to two or three apprentices apiece was out of the question with the new buyers of labour on a large scale. Confronted with such a case as this for the masters even the most sympathetic committee seldom found it possible to endorse the proposals of the artisans. In fact, these proposals were impossible. The artisans had a grievance—perhaps the worst that any class can have—the degradation of their standard of livelihood by circumstances which enormously increased the productivity of their labour. But they mistook the remedy; and Parliament, though it saw the mistake, could devise nothing better. Common sense forced the Government to take the easy and obvious step of abolishing the mediæval regulations which industry had outgrown. But the problem of protecting the workers' Standard of Life under the new conditions was neither easy nor obvious, and it remained unsolved until the nineteenth century discovered the expedient of Factory

[1] House of Commons Journals, vol. xxxvi. pp. 192, 240, 268, 287, 1777; Act 17 Geo. III. c. 55, repealing 8 Eliz. c. 11, and 1 Jac. 1.

Legislation. In the meantime the workers were left to shift for themselves, the attitude of Parliament towards them being for the first years one of pure perplexity, quite untouched by the doctrine of freedom of contract.

That the House of Commons remained innocent of any general theory against legislative interference long after it had begun the work of sweeping away the mediæval regulations is proved by the famous case of the Spitalfields silkweavers, in which the old policy of industrial regulation was reverted to. In 1765 the Spitalfields weavers protested that they were without employment, owing to the importation of foreign silk. Assembling in crowds, they marched in processions to Westminster, headed by bands and banners, and demanded the prohibition of the import of the foreign product. Riots occurred sufficiently serious to induce Parliament to pass an Act in the terms desired;[1] but this experiment in Protection failed to maintain wages, and the riots were renewed in 1769. Finally Sir John Fielding, the well-known London police magistrate, suggested to the London silkweavers that they should secure their earnings by an Act.[2] Under the pressure of another outbreak of rioting in 1773, Parliament adopted this proposal, and empowered the justices to fix the rates of wages and to enforce their maintenance. The effect of this enactment upon the men's combination is significant. "A great man" had told the weavers, as one of them relates, that the governing class "made laws, and we, the people, must make legs to them."[3] The ephemeral combination to obtain the Act became accordingly a permanent union to enforce it. From this time forth we hear no more of

[1] 5 Geo. III. c. 48; see *Annual Register*, 1765, p. 41; *Cunningham*, vol. ii. p. 336.

[2] Act 13 Geo. III. c. 68; see *A Short Historical Account of the Silk Manufacture in England*, by Samuel Sholl (London, 1811).

[3] *A Short Historical Account of the Silk Manufacture in England*, by Samuel Sholl (London, 1811), p. 4

strikes or riots among the Spitalfields weavers. Instead, we see arising a permanent machinery, designated the "Union," for the representation, before the justices, of both masters and men, upon whose evidence the complicated lists of piecework rates are periodically settled. Clearly the Parliaments which passed the Spitalfields Acts of 1765 and 1773 had no conception of the political philosophy of Adam Smith, whose "Wealth of Nations," afterwards to be accepted as the English gospel of freedom of contract and "natural liberty," was published in 1776. At the same time, so exceptional had such acts become, that when Adam Smith's masterpiece came into the hands of the statesmen of the time, it must have seemed not so much a novel view of industrial economics as the explicit generalisation of practical conclusions to which experience had already repeatedly driven them.

Towards the end of the century the governing classes, who had found in the new industrial policy a source of enormous pecuniary profit, eagerly seized on the new economic theory as an intellectual and moral justification of that policy. The abandonment of the operatives by the law, previously resorted to under pressure of circumstances, and, as we gather, not without some remorse, was now carried out on principle, with unflinching determination. When the handloom-weavers, earning little more than a third of the livelihood they had gained ten years before, and unable to realise that the factory system would be deliberately allowed to ruin them, made themselves heard in the House of Commons in 1808, a Committee reported against their proposal to fix a minimum rate of wages on the ground that it was "wholly inadmissible in principle, incapable of being reduced to practice by any means which can possibly be devised, and, if practicable, would be productive of the most fatal consequences;" and "that the proposition relative to the limiting the number of apprentices is also entirely inadmissible, and would, if adopted by the House, be attended with the greatest injustice to the manufacturer

as well as to the labourer." [1] Here we have *laisser-faire* fully established in Parliament as an authoritative industrial doctrine of political economy, able to overcome the great bulk of the evidence given before this Committee, which was decidedly in favour of the minimum wage. The House of Commons had no lack of opportunities for educating itself on the question. The special misery caused by bad harvests and the prolonged war between 1793 and 1815 [2] brought a rush of appeals, especially from the newly established associations of cotton operatives. In the early years of the present century petition after petition poured in from Lancashire and Glasgow, showing that the rates for weaving had steadily declined, and reiterating the old demands for a legally fixed scale of piecework rates and the limitation of apprentices. In 1795, and again in 1800, and once more in 1808, bills fixing a minimum rate were introduced into the House of Commons, sometimes meeting with considerable favour. The report of the Committee of 1808, which took voluminous evidence on the subject, has already been quoted. Petitions from the calico-printers for a legal limitation of the number of apprentices, although warmly supported by the Select Committee to which they were referred, met with the same fate. Sheridan, indeed, was not convinced, and brought in a bill proposing, among other things, to limit the number of apprentices. But Sir Robert Peel (the elder), whose own factories swarmed with boys, opposed it in the name of industrial freedom, and carried the House of Commons with him.[3]

Meanwhile the despairing operatives, baffled in their attempts to procure fresh legislation, turned for aid to

[1] *Reports on Petitions of Cotton Weavers*, 1809 *and* 1811.

[2] "The period between 1795 and 1815 was characterised by dearths which on several occasions became well-nigh famines." (Thorold Rogers, *History of Agriculture and Prices*, vol. i. p. 692.)

[3] *Minutes of Evidence and Report of the Committee on the Petition of the Journeymen Calico-printers*, July 4, 1804, July 17, 1806. See also Sheridan's speech reported in Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, vol. ix. pp. 534–8.

the existing law. Unrepealed statutes still enabled the justices in some trades to fix the rate of wages, limited in others the number of apprentices; in others, again, prohibited certain kinds of machinery, and forbade any but apprenticed men to exercise the trade. So completely had these statutes fallen into disuse that their very existence was in many instances unknown to the artisans. The West of England weavers, however, combined with those of Yorkshire in 1802 to employ an attorney, who took proceedings against employers for infringing the old laws. The result was that Parliament hastily passed an Act suspending these statutes, in order to put a stop to the prosecutions.[1] "At a numerous meeting of the cordwainers of the City of New Sarum in 1784," says an old circular that we have seen, "it was unanimously resolved . . . that a subscription be entered into for putting the law in force against infringements on the Trade," but apparently without result.[2] The Edinburgh compositors were more successful; on being refused an advance of wages, to correspond with the rise in the cost of living, they presented, February 28, 1804, a memorial to the Court of Session, and obtained the celebrated "Interlocutor" of 1805, which fixed a scale of piecework prices for the Edinburgh printing trade.[3] But the chief event of this campaign for the enforcement of the old laws began in Glasgow. The cotton-weavers of that city, after four or

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[1] 43 Geo. III. c. 136, continued in successive years until the definite repeal, in 1809, of most of the laws regulating the woollen manufacture by 49 Geo. III. c. 109; see *Cunningham*, vol. ii. p. 455.

[2] It was reprinted in the 121st Quarterly Report of the Amalgamated Society of Boot and Shoemakers. The proceedings were taken by the Friendly Society of Cordwainers of England, "instituted the 15th of November, 1784."

[3] Professor Foxwell possesses a unique series of pamphlets relating to these proceedings, which he has kindly placed at our disposal, including the *Memorials* of the journeymen and the employers, the *Report in the Process* by Robert Bell, and the *Scale of Prices* as settled by the Court. A full account of the proceedings is given in the *Scottish Typographical Circular*, June, 1858.

five years of Parliamentary agitation for additional legislation, resorted to the law empowering the justices to fix the rates of wages. After an unsuccessful attempt to fix a standard rate by agreement with a committee of employers, the men's association which now extended throughout the whole of the cotton-weaving districts in the United Kingdom commenced legal proceedings at the Lanarkshire Quarter Sessions. The employers in 1812 disputed the competence of the magistrates, and appealed to the Court of Sessions at Edinburgh. The Court held that the magistrates were competent to fix a scale or wages, and a table of piecework rates was accordingly drawn up. The employers immediately withdrew from the proceedings; but the operatives were nevertheless compelled, at great expense, to produce witnesses to testify to every one of the numerous rates proposed. After one hundred and thirty witnesses had been heard, the magistrates at length declared the rates to be reasonable, but made no actual order enforcing them. The employers, with few exceptions, refused to accept the table, which it had cost the operatives £3,000 to obtain. The result was the most extensive strike the trade has ever known. From Carlisle to Aberdeen every loom stopped, forty thousand weavers ceasing work almost simultaneously. After three weeks' strike the employers were preparing to meet the operatives, when the whole Strike Committee was suddenly arrested by the police, and held to bail under the common law for the crime of combination, of which the authorities, in that revolutionary period, were very jealous on purely political grounds. The five leaders were sentenced to terms of imprisonment varying from four to eighteen months; and this blow broke up the combination, defeated the strike, and put an end to the struggles of the operatives against the progressive degradation of their wages.[1]

[1] See, for these proceedings, the two *Reports of the Committee on the Petitions of the Cotton Weavers*, April 12, 1808, and March 29, 1809; and Richmond's evidence before the Committee on Artisans and Machinery, 1824, Second Report, pp. 59–64.

The London artisans, though they were not put down by prosecution and imprisonment, met with no greater success than their Glasgow brethren. Between 1810 and 1812 a number of trade societies combined to engage the services of a solicitor, who prosecuted masters for employing "illegal men," that is to say, men who had not by apprenticeship gained a right to follow the trade. The original "case" which the journeymen curriers submitted to counsel in 1810 (fee two guineas), with a view to putting in force the Statute of Apprentices, is in our possession, together with the somewhat hesitating opinion of the legal adviser. In a few cases proceedings were even taken against employers for having set up in trades to which they had not themselves served their time. Convictions were obtained in some instances; but no costs were allowed to the prosecutors, who were, on the other hand, condemned to pay heavy costs when they failed. Lord Ellenborough, moreover, held on appeal that new trades, such as those of engineer and lockmaker, were not included within the Elizabethan Acts. In 1811 certain journeymen millers of Kent petitioned the justices to fix a rate of wages under the Elizabethan Act. When the justices refused to hear the petition a writ of mandamus was applied for. Lord Ellenborough granted the writ to compel them to hear the petition, but said they were to exercise their own discretion as to whether they would fix any rate. The justices, on this hint, declined to fix the wages.[1] It soon became apparent that legal proceedings under these obsolete statutes were, in face of the adverse bias of the courts, as futile as they were costly. There was nothing for it then but either to abandon the line of attack or to petition Parliament to make effective the still unrepealed laws. This they accordingly did, with the unexpected result that the "pernicious" law empowering justices to fix wages was in 1813 peremptorily repealed.[2]

[1] R. *v.* Justices of Kent, 14 East, 395; see F. D. Longe's *Inquiry into the Law of Strikes* (London, 1860), pp. 10, 11.

[2] 53 Geo. III. c. 40 (1813).

The law thus swept away was but one section of the great Elizabethan statute, and its repeal left the other clauses untouched. A Select Committee had already, in 1811, reported that "no interference of the legislature with the freedom of trade, or with the perfect liberty of every individual to dispose of his time and of his labour in the way and on the terms which he may judge most conducive to his own interest, can take place without violating general principles of the first importance to the prosperity and happiness of the community; without establishing the most pernicious precedent, or even without aggravating, after a very short time, the pressure of the general distress, and imposing obstacles against that distress being ever removed." The repeal of the wages' clauses of the statute made this emphatic declaration of the new doctrine law as far as the fixing of wages was concerned; but there remained the apprenticeship clauses. Petitions for the enforcement of these, and their extension to the new trades, kept pouring in. They were finally referred to a large and influential committee, which included Canning, Huskisson, Sir Robert Peel, and Sir James Graham among its members. The witnesses examined were strongly in favour of the retention of the laws, with amendments bringing them up to date. The chairman (Mr. Rose) was apparently converted to the view of the operatives by the evidence. The committee, which had undoubtedly been appointed to formulate the complete abolition of the apprenticeship clauses, found itself unable to fulfil its virtual mandate. Not venturing, in the teeth of the manufacturers and economists, to recommend the House to comply with the operatives' demands, it got out of the difficulty by making no recommendation at all. Hundreds of petitions in favour of the laws continued to pour in from all parts of the country, 300,000 signatures being for retention against 2,000 for repeal, masters often joining in the journeymen's prayer. A public meeting of the "Master Manufacturers and Tradesmen of the Cities of London and Westminster,"

at the Freemasons' Tavern, passed resolutions strongly supporting the amendment and enforcement of the existing law. On the other hand, a committee on which the master engineers Maudsley and Galloway were prominent members, argued forcibly in favour of freedom and against "the monstrous and alarming but misguided association." In 1814 Mr. Serjeant Onslow, who had not served on the committee of the previous session, introduced a Bill to repeal the whole apprenticeship law. The "Masters and Journeymen of Westminster" were heard by counsel against this measure, but the House had made up its mind in favour of the manufacturers, and by the Act of 54 Geo. III. c. 96 swept away the apprenticeship clauses of the statute, and with them practically the last remnant of that legislative protection of the Standard of Life which survived from the Middle Ages.[1] The triumphant manufacturers presented Serjeant Onslow with several pieces of plate for his championship of commercial liberty.[2]

[1] The Spitalfields Acts, relating to the silkweavers, were, nowever, not repealed until 1824; and the last sections of 5 Eliz. c. 4 were not formally repealed until 1875.

[2] White's *Digest of all the laws at present in existence respecting Masters and Workpeople* (1824), p. 59.

The proceedings in this matter can be best traced in the House of Commons Journals for 1813 and 1814, vols. lxviii. and lxix.; and in Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, vols. xxv. and xxvii. The masters' case is given in a pamphlet, *The Origin, Object, and Operation of the Apprentice Laws* (London, 1814, 26 pp.), preserved in the *Pamphleteer*, vol. iii. The *Resolutions of the Master Manufacturers and Tradesmen of the Cities of London and Westminster on the Statute* 5 Eliz. c. 4 (London, 1814, 4 pp.), gives the contrary view (B. M. 1882, d. 2). The contemporary argument for freedom is expressed in *An Estimate of the Comparative Strength of Great Britain*, by G. Chalmers (London, 1810); see *Cunningham*, vol. ii. p. 578. The Nottingham Free Library possesses a unique copy of the *Articles and General Regulations of a Society for obtaining Parliamentary Relief, and the encouragement of mechanics in the improvement of mechanism*, printed at Nottingham in 1813. This appears to have been a federation of framework knitters' societies, and possibly others, for Parliamentary action, as well as trade protection; and its establishment in 1813 was perhaps connected with the movement for the revival of the Apprenticeship Laws.

So thoroughly had the new doctrine by this time driven out the very recollection of the old ideals from the mind of the governing class that it was now the operatives who were regarded as innovators, and we are hardly surprised to find another committee gravely declaring that "the right of every man to employ the capital he inherits, or has acquired, according to his own discretion, without molestation or obstruction, so long as he does not infringe on the rights or property of others, is one of those privileges which the free and happy constitution of this country has long accustomed every Briton to consider as his birthright."[1] But it must be added that the governing class was by no means impartial in the application of its new doctrine. Mediæval regulation acted not only in restriction of free competition in the labour market to the pecuniary loss of the employers, but also in restriction of free contract to the loss of the employés, who could only obtain the best terms for their labour by collective instead of individual bargaining. Consequently the operatives, if they had clearly understood the situation, would have been as anxious to abolish the laws against combination as to maintain those fixing wages and limiting apprenticeship; just as the capitalists, better informed, were no less resolute in maintaining the anti-combination laws than in repealing the others. We shall presently see how slow the workers were to realise this, in spite of the fact that the laws against combinations of workmen were maintained in force, and even increased in severity. Strikes, and any organised resistance to the employers' demands, were put down with a high hand. The first twenty years of the nineteenth century witnessed a legal persecution of Trade Unionists as rebels and revolutionists. This persecution, thwarting the healthy growth of the Unions, and driving their members into violence and sedition, but finally leading to the repeal of the Combination Laws and the birth of the modern Trade Union Movement, will be the subject of the next chapter.

[1] *Report of the Committee on the State of the Woollen Manufacture in England*, July 4, 1806, p. 12.

CHAPTER II.

THE STRUGGLE FOR EXISTENCE.

[1799–1825.]

THE traditional history of the Trade Union Movement represents the period prior to 1824 as one of unmitigated persecution and continuous repression. Every Union that can claim an existence of more than half a century possesses a romantic legend of its early days. The midnight meeting of patriots in the corner of the field, the buried box of records, the secret oath, the long terms of imprisonment of the leading officials—all these are in the sagas of the older Unions, and form material out of which, in an age untroubled by historical criticism, a semi-mythical origin might easily have been created. That the legend is not without a basis of fact, we shall see in tracing the actual effect upon the Trade Union Movement of the legal prohibitions of combinations of wage-earners which prevailed throughout the United Kingdom up to 1824. But we shall find that some combinations of journeymen were at all times recognised by the law, that many others were only spasmodically interfered with, and that the utmost rigour of the Combination Laws was not felt until the far-reaching change of policy marked by the severe Acts of 1799-1800, which applied to all industries whatsoever. This will lead us naturally to the story of the repeal of the whole series of Combination Laws in 1824–5, the most impressive event in the early history of the movement.

There is a clear distinction—at any rate, as regards England—between the various statutes which forbade combination prior to the end of the eighteenth century, and the general Combination Act of 1799. In the numerous earlier Acts recited and repealed in 1824 the prohibition of combination was in all cases incidental to the regulation of the industry. It was assumed to be the business of Parliament and the law courts to regulate the conditions of labour ; and combinations could, no more than individuals, be permitted to interfere in disputes for which a legal remedy was provided. The object aimed at by the statutes was not the prohibition of combinations, but the fixing of wages, the prevention of embezzlement or damage, the enforcement of the contract of service or the proper arrangements for apprenticeship. And although combinations to interfere with these statutory aims were obviously illegal, and were usually expressly prohibited, it was an incidental result that combinations formed to promote the objects of the legislation, however objectionable they might be to employers, were apparently not regarded as unlawful.

Thus the earliest type of combination among journeymen—the society to enforce the law—seems always to have been tacitly accepted as permissible. Although it is probable that such associations came technically within the definitions of combination and conspiracy, whether under the common law or the early statutes, we know of no case in which they were indicted as illegal. We have already described, for instance, how, in 1726, the woollen weavers of Wiltshire and Somersetshire openly combined to present a petition to the King in Council against their masters, the broad clothiers. The Privy Council, far from deeming the action of the weavers illegal, considered and dealt with their complaint. And when the employers persisted in disobeying the law, we have seen how, in 1756, the Fraternity of Woollen Clothweavers petitioned the House of Commons to make more effectual the power of the justices to fix wages, and obtained a new Act of

Parliament in accordance with their desires. The almost perpetual combinations of the framework knitters between 1710 and 1800 were never made the subject of legal proceedings. The combinations of the London silkweavers obtained a virtual sanction by the Spitalfields Acts, under which the delegates of the workmen's organisations regularly appeared before the justices, who fixed and revised the piecework prices. Even in 1808, after the stringency of the law against combinations had been greatly increased, the Glasgow and Lancashire cotton-weavers were permitted openly to combine for the purpose of seeking a legal fixing of wages, with the results already described. Nor was it only the combination to obtain a legally fixed rate of wages that was left unmolested by the law. Combinations to put in force the sections of the Statute of Apprentices (5 Eliz. c. 4), or other prohibitions of the employment of "illegal workmen," occurred at intervals down to 1813. In 1749 a club of journeymen painters of the City of London proceeded against a master painter for employing a non-freeman; and the proceedings led, in 1750, to a conference of thirty journeymen and thirty masters with the City Corporation, at which the regulations were altered.[1] No one seems to have questioned the legality of the 1811–13 outburst of combinations to prosecute masters who had not served an apprenticeship, or who were employing unapprenticed workmen. One reason, doubtless, for the immunity of combinations to enforce the law was that they included employers and sympathisers of all ranks. For instance, the combinations in 1811–13 to enforce the apprenticeship laws comprised both masters and journeymen, who were equally aggrieved by the

[1] Act of Common Council, November 22, 1750: Hughson's *London*, p. 422. There is evidence of at least one other club of painters in London dating back to the eighteenth century, the "Original Society of Painters and Glaziers" existing in 1779, which afterwards became the St. Martin's Society of Painters and Glaziers. (*Beehive*, October 24, 1863.)

competition of the new capitalist and his "hirelings."[1] The Yorkshire Clothiers' Community, or "Brief Institution," to which reference has already been made, included, in some of its ramifications, the "domestic" master manufacturers, who fought side by side with the journeymen against the new factory system.

On the other hand, combinations of journeymen to regulate for themselves their wages and conditions of employment stood, from the first, on a different footing. The common law doctrine of the illegality of proceedings "in restraint of trade," as subsequently interpreted by the judges, of itself made illegal all combinations whatsoever of journeymen to regulate the conditions of their work. Moreover, with the regulation by law of wages and the conditions of employment, any combination to resist the order of the justices on these matters was obviously of the nature of rebellion, and was, in fact, put down like any individual disobedience of the law. Nor was express statute law against combinations wanting. The statute of 1305, entitled, "Who be Conspirators and who be Champertors" (33 Edw. I. st. 2), was in 1818 held to apply to a combination to raise wages among cotton-spinners, whose leaders were sentenced to two years' imprisonment under this Act. The "Bill of Conspiracies of Victuallers and Craftsmen" of 1549 (2 and 3 Edw. VI. c. 15), though aimed primarily at combinations to keep up the prices charged to consumers, clearly includes within its prohibitions any combinations of journeymen craftsmen to keep up wages or reduce hours.

It is some proof of the novelty of the workmen's combinations in the early part of the eighteenth century, that neither the employers nor the authorities thought at first of resorting to the very sufficient powers of the existing law against them. When, in 1720, the

[1] This term was used to denote men who had not served a legal apprenticeship. See "Rules and Regulations of the Journeymen Weavers," reprinted in Appendix No. 10 to Report on Combination Laws, 1825.

master tailors of London found themselves confronted with an organised body of journeymen claiming to make a collective bargain, seriously "in restraint of trade," they turned, not to the law courts, but to Parliament for protection, and obtained, as we have seen, the Act "for regulating the Journeymen Tailors within the bills of mortality" (7 Geo. I. st. 1, c. 13, amended by 8 Geo. III. c. 17).[1] Similarly, when the clothiers of the West of England began between 1717 and 1725 to be inconvenienced by the "riotous and tumultuous clubs and societies" of woolcombers and weavers, who made bye-laws and maintained a Standard Rate,[2] they did not put in force the existing law, but successfully petitioned Parliament for the Act "to prevent unlawful combinations of workmen employed in the Woollen Manufactures" (12 Geo. I. c. 34). Indeed, prior to the general Acts of 1799 and 1800 against all combinations of journeymen, Parliament was, from the beginning of the eighteenth century, perpetually enacting statutes forbidding combinations in particular trades.[3]

In the English statutes this prohibition of combination was, as we have seen, only a secondary feature, incidental to the main purpose of the law. The case is different with regard to the early Irish Acts, the terms of which point to a much sharper cleavage between masters and men, due, perhaps, to difference of religion and race. The very first statute against combinations which was passed

[1] The case of R. *v.* the Journeymen Tailors of Cambridge in 1721 (8 Mod. 10) is obscurely reported; and it is uncertain under what law the men were convicted. See Wright's *Law of Criminal Conspiracies and Agreements*, p. 53.

[2] See the petitions from Devonshire towns, House of Commons Journals (1717), vol. xviii. p. 715, which, with others in subsequent years, led to a Select Committee in 1726 (Journals, vol. xx. p. 648, March 31, 1726).

[3] See, for instance, the Acts regulating the woollen industry, 12 Geo. I. c. 34 (1725); against embezzlement or fraud by shoemakers, 9 Geo. I. c. 27 (1729); relating to hatters, 22 Geo. II. c. 27 (1749); to silkweavers, 17 Geo. III. c. 55 (1777); and to paper-making, 36 Geo. III. c. 111 (1795).

by the Irish Parliament, the Act of 1729 (3 Geo. II. c. 14), contained no provisions protecting the wage-earner, and prohibited combinations in all trades whatsoever. The Act of 1743 (17 Geo. II. c. 8), called forth by the failure of the previous prohibition, equally confined itself to drastic penal measures, including the punishment of the keepers of the public-houses which were used for meetings. But in later years the English practice seems to have been followed; for the laws of 1758 (31 Geo. II. c. 17), 1763 (3 Geo. III. 34, sec. 23), 1771 (11 and 12 Geo. III. c. 18, sec. 40, and c. 33), and 1779 (19 and 20 Geo. III. c. 19, c. 24, and c. 36) provide for the fixing of wages, and contain other regulations of industry, amongst which the prohibition of combinations comes as a matter of course.

By the end of the century, at any rate, the common law, both in England and in Ireland, had been brought to the aid of the special statutes, and the judges were ruling that any conspiracy to do an act which they considered unlawful in a combination, even if not criminal in an individual, was against the common law. Soon the legislature followed suit. In 1799 the Act 39 Geo. III. c. 81 expressly penalised all combinations whatsoever.

The grounds for this drastic measure are nowhere clearly stated, but it appears to have been connected with the marked increase of Trade Unionism among the textile workers of Yorkshire and Lancashire. The Bill was hurried through Parliament with great rapidity, receiving the Royal Assent only twenty-four days after its introduction into the House of Commons. There was, therefore, little opportunity for any protest against its provisions, but the Journeymen Calico-printers' Society of London petitioned against the measure, and instructed counsel to put forward their objections. They represented that, although the Bill professed merely "to prevent unlawful combinations," it created "new crimes of so indefinite a nature that no one journeyman or workman will be safe in holding any conversation with another on the subject

of his trade or employment." But no other trades took action, and the Bill passed unaltered into law.[1]

The general Combination Act of 1799, re-affirmed and amended by that of 1800 (39 and 40 Geo. III. c. 60), which added some abortive arbitration clauses, was not merely the codification of existing laws, or their extension from particular trades to the whole field of industry. It represented a new and momentous departure. Hitherto the central or local authority had acted as a court of appeal on all questions affecting the work and wages of the citizen. If the master and journeyman failed to agree as to what constituted a fair day's wage for a fair day's work, the higgling of the market was peremptorily superseded by the authoritative determination, presumably on grounds of social expediency, of the standard of remuneration. Probably the actual fixing of wages by justices of the peace fell very rapidly into disuse as regards the majority of industries, although deep traces of the practice long survived in the customary rates of hiring. Towards the end of the last century, at any rate, free bargaining between the capitalist and his workmen became the sole method of fixing wages. Then it was that the gross injustice of prohibiting combinations of journeymen became apparent. "A single master," said Lord Jeffrey, "was at liberty at any time to turn off the whole of his workmen at once—100 or 1000 in number—if they would not accept of the wages he chose to offer. But it was made an offence for the whole of the workmen to leave that

[1] *A Full and Accurate Report of the Proceedings of the Petitioners*, &c. By One of the Petitioners. (London, January, 1800, 19 pp.) A rare pamphlet in Professor Foxwell's library. "It is remarkable," says Mr. Justice Stephen, "that in the parliamentary history for 1799 and 1800 there is no account of any debate on these Acts, nor are they referred to in the Annual Register for those years." (*History of the Criminal Law*, vol. iii. p. 208.) That the measure excited some interest in the textile districts may be inferred from the publication at Leeds of a pamphlet entitled an *Abstract of an Act to prevent Unlawful Combinations among Journeymen to raise Wages*, &c. (Leeds, 1799), which is in the Manchester Public Library (P. 1735).

master at once if he refused to give the wages they chose to require." [1]

It is true that the law forbade combinations of employers as well as combinations of journeymen. But even if it had been impartially carried out, there would still have remained the inequality due to the fact that, in the new system of industry, a single employer was himself equivalent to a very numerous combination. But the hand of justice was not impartial. The "tacit, but constant" combination of employers to depress wages, to which Adam Smith refers, could not be reached by the law. Nor was there any disposition on the part of the magistrates or the judges to find the masters guilty, even in cases of flagrant or avowed combination. No one prosecuted the master cutlers who, in 1814, openly formed the Sheffield Mercantile and Manufacturing Union, having for its main rule that no merchant or manufacturer should pay higher prices for any article of Sheffield make than were current in the preceding year, with a penalty of £100 for each contravention of this illegal agreement.[2] During the whole epoch of repression, whilst thousands of journeymen suffered for the crime of combination, there is absolutely no case on record in which an employer was punished for the same offence.

To the ordinary politician a combination of employers and a combination of workmen seemed in no way comparable. The former was, at most, an industrial misdemeanour: the latter was in all cases a political crime. Under the shadow of the French Revolution, the English governing classes regarded all associations of the common people with the utmost alarm. In this general terror lest insubordination should develop into rebellion were merged both the capitalist's objection to high wages and the politician's dislike of Democratic institutions. The

[1] *Combinations of Workmen: Substance of the Speech of Francis Jeffrey at the Dinner to Joseph Hume, M.P., at Edinburgh, November* 18, 1825 (Edinburgh, 1825).

[2] *Sheffield Iris*, March 23, 1814.

Combination Laws, as Francis Place tells us, "were considered as absolutely necessary to prevent ruinous extortions of workmen, which, if not thus restrained, would destroy the whole of the Trade, Manufactures, Commerce, and Agriculture of the nation. . . . This led to the conclusion that the workmen were the most unprincipled of mankind. Hence the continued ill-will, suspicion, and in almost every possible way, the bad conduct of workmen and their employers towards one another. So thoroughly was this false notion entertained that whenever men were prosecuted to conviction for having combined to regulate their wages or the hours of working, however heavy the sentence passed on them was, and however rigorously it was inflicted, not the slightest feeling of compassion was manifested by anybody for the unfortunate sufferers. Justice was entirely out of the question: they could seldom obtain a hearing before a magistrate, never without impatience or insult; and never could they calculate on even an approximation to a rational conclusion. . . . Could an accurate account be given of proceedings, of hearings before magistrates, trials at sessions and in the Court of King's Bench, the gross injustice, the foul invective, and terrible punishments inflicted would not, after a few years have passed away, be credited on any but the best evidence." [1]

It must not, however, be supposed that every combination was made the subject of prosecution, or that the Trade Union leader of the period passed his whole life in gaol. Owing to the extremely inefficient organisation of the English police, and the absence of any public prosecutor, a combination was usually let alone until some employer was sufficiently inconvenienced by its operations to be willing himself to set the law in motion. In many cases we find employers apparently accepting or conniving at their men's combinations.[2] The master printers in London not only recognised the very ancient

[1] Place MSS. 27798—7.

[2] This is a constant subject of complaint by other employers.

institution of the "chapel,"[1] but evidently found it convenient, from 1785 onwards, to receive and consider proposals from the journeymen as an organised body. In 1804 we even hear of a joint committee consisting of an equal number of masters and journeymen, authorised by their respective bodies to frame regulations for the future payment of labour, and resulting in the elaborate "scale" of 1805, signed by both masters and men.[2] The London coopers had a recognised organisation in 1813, in which year a list of prices was agreed upon by representatives of the masters and men. This list was revised in 1816 and 1819, without any one thinking of a prosecution.[3] The London brushmakers in 1805 had "A List of Prices agreed upon between the Masters and Journeymen," which is still extant. The framework knitters, and also the tailors of the various villages in Nottinghamshire, were, from 1794 to 1810, in the habit of freely meeting together, both masters and men, "to consider of matters relative to the trade," the conferences being convened by public advertisement.[4] The minute books of the local Trade Union of the carpenters of Preston, for the years 1807 to 1824, chronicle an apparently unconcealed and unmolested existence, in correspondence with other carpenters' societies throughout Lancashire. The accounts contain no items for the expense of defending their officers against prosecutions, whereas there are several payments for advertisements and public meetings, and, be it added, a very large expenditure in beer. And there is a lively tradition among the aged block printers of Glasgow that, in their fathers' time, when their very active Trade Union exacted a fee of seven guineas from each new

[1] Benjamin Franklin mentions the "chapel" and its regulations in 1725. A copy, dated 1734, of the *Rules and Orders to be observed by the Members of this Chapel: by Compositors, by Pressmen, by Both*, is preserved in the Place MSS. 27799—88.

[2] Introduction to the London Scale of Prices (in London Society of Compositors' volume).

[3] House of Commons Return, No. 135, of 1834.

[4] Advertisements in *Nottingham Journal*, 1794–1810.

apprentice, this money was always straightway drunk by the men of the print-field, the employer taking his seat at the head of the table, and no work being done by any one until the fund was exhausted. The calico-printers' organisation appears, at the early part of the century, to have been one of the strongest and most complete of the Unions. In an impressive pamphlet, "Considerations addressed to the Journeymen Calico-printers by one of their Masters" (Manchester, 1815), the men are thus appealed to by the employers:—"We have by turns conceded what we ought all manfully to have resisted, and you, elated with success, have been led on from one extravagant demand to another, till the burden is become too intolerable to be borne. You fix the number of our apprentices, and oftentimes even the number of our journeymen. You dismiss certain proportions of our hands, and will not allow others to come in their stead. You stop all Surface Machines, and go the length even to destroy the rollers before our face. You restrict the Cylinder Machine, and even dictate the kind of pattern it is to print. You refuse, on urgent occasions, to work by candlelight, and even compel our apprentices to do the same. You dismiss our overlookers when they don't suit you; and force obnoxious servants into our employ. Lastly, you set all subordination and good order at defiance, and instead of showing deference and respect to your employers, treat them with personal insult and contempt." Notwithstanding all this, no systematic attempt appears to have been made to put down the calico-printers' combination, and only one or two isolated prosecutions can be traced. In Dublin, too, the cabinet-makers in the early part of the present century were combined in a strong union called the Samaritan Society, exclusively for trade purposes; "but though illegal, the employers do not seem to have looked upon it with any great aversion; and when on one occasion the chief constable had the men attending a meeting arrested, the employers came forward to bail them. Indeed, they

professed that their object, though primarily to defend their own interests against the masters, was also to defend the interests of the masters against unprincipled journeymen. Many of the masters on receiving the bill of a journeyman were in the habit of sending it to the trades' society committee to be taxed, after which the word Committee was stamped upon it. One case was mentioned, when between two and three pounds were knocked off a bill of about eight pounds by the trade committee." [1] And both in London and Edinburgh the journeymen openly published, without fear of prosecution, elaborate printed lists of piecework prices, compiled sometimes by a committee of the men's Trade Union, sometimes by a joint committee of employers and employed.[2] "The London Cabinetmakers' Union Book of Prices," of which editions were published in 1811 and 1824, was a costly and elaborate work, with many plates, published "by a Committee of Masters and Journeymen . . . to prevent those litigations which have too frequently existed in the trade." Various supplements and "index keys" to this work were published; and other similar lists exist. So lax was the administration of the law that George White, the energetic clerk to Hume's Committee, asserted that the Act of 1800 had "been in general a dead letter upon those artisans upon whom it was intended to have an effect—namely, the shoemakers, printers, papermakers, shipbuilders, tailors, &c., who have had their regular societies and houses of call, as though no such Act was in existence: and in fact it would be almost impossible for many of those trades to be carried on without such societies, who

[1] Evidence before Committee on Artisans and Machinery, 1824, as summarised in the *Report on Trade Societies* (1860) of the Social Science Association.

[2] *The Edinburgh Book of Prices for manufacturing Cabinet Work* (Edinburgh, 1805, 126 pp.), "as mutually agreed upon by the Masters and Journeymen." In 1825 the journeymen prepared a *Supplement*, which, after the masters had concurred in it, was published by the men (Edinburgh, 1825). Both these are in Professor Foxwell's library.

are in general sick and travelling relief societies; and the roads and parishes would be much pestered with these travelling trades, who travel from want of employment, were it not for their societies who relieve what they call tramps."[1]

But although clubs of journeymen might be allowed to take, like the London bookbinders, "a social pint of porter together," and even, in times of industrial peace, to provide for their tramps and perform all the functions of a Trade Union, the employers had always the power of meeting any demands by a prosecution. Even those trades in which we have discovered evidence of the unmolested existence of combinations, furnish examples of the rigorous application of the law. In 1819 we read of numerous prosecutions of cabinetmakers, hatters, iron-founders, and other journeymen, nominally for leaving their work unfinished, but really for the crime of combination.[2] In 1798 five journeymen printers were indicted at the Old Bailey for conspiracy. The employers had sent for the men's leaders to discuss their proposals, when, as it was complained, "the five defendants came, clothed as delegates, representing themselves as the head of a Parliament as we may call it." The men were, in fact, members of a trade friendly society of pressmen "held at the Crown, near St. Dunstan's Church, Fleet Street," which, as the prosecuting counsel declared, "from its appearance certainly bore no reproachable mark upon it. It was called a friendly society, but by means of some wicked men among them this society degenerated into a most abominable meeting for the purpose of a conspiracy; those of the trade who did not join their society were summoned, and even the apprentices, and were told unless they conformed to the practices of these journeymen, when they came out of their times they should not be employed."

[1] *A few Remarks on the State of the laws at present in existence for regulating Masters and Workpeople* (London, 1823, 142 pp.), p. 84. Anonymous, but evidently by George White and Gravener Henson.

[2] See, for instance, the *Times* from 17th to 25th of June, 1819.

Notwithstanding the fact that the employers had themselves recognised and negotiated with the society, the Recorder sentenced all the defendants to two years' imprisonment.[1]

Twelve years later it was the brutality of the prosecution of the compositors that impressed Francis Place with the necessity of an alteration in the law. "The cruel persecutions," he writes, "of the Journeymen Printers employed on the *Times* newspaper in 1810 were carried to an almost incredible extent. The judge who tried and sentenced some of them was the Common Sergeant of London, Sir John Sylvester, commonly known by the cognomen of 'Bloody Black Jack.' . . . No judge took more pains than did this judge on the unfortunate printers, to make it appear that their offence was one of great enormity, to beat down and alarm the really respectable men who had fallen into his clutches, and on whom he inflicted scandalously severe sentences."[2] Nor did prosecution always depend on the caprice of an employer. In December, 1817, the Bolton constables, accidentally getting to know that ten delegates of the calico-printers from the various districts of the kingdom were to meet on New Year's Day, arranged to arrest the whole body and seize all their papers. The ten delegates suffered three months' imprisonment, although no dispute with their employers was in progress.[3] But the main use of the law to the employers was to checkmate strikes, and ward off demands for better conditions of labour. Already, in 1786, the law of conspiracy had been strained to convict, and punish with two years' imprisonment, the five London bookbinders who were leading a strike to reduce hours from twelve to eleven. When, at the Aberdeen Master Tailors' Gild, in 1797, "it was repre-

[1] *An Account of the Rise and Progress of the Dispute between the Masters and Journeymen Printers exemplified in the Trial at large, with Remarks Thereon* (London, 1799), a rare pamphlet, in Professor Foxwell's library.

[2] Place MSS. 27798—8; *Times*, November 9, 1810.

[3] Report in *Manchester Exchange Herald*, preserved in Place MSS. 27799—156.

sented to the trade that their journeymen had entered into an illegal combination for the purpose of raising their wages," the masters unanimously "agreed not to give any additional wages to their servants," and backed up this resolution of their own combination by getting twelve journeymen prosecuted and fined for the crime of combining.[1] In 1799 the success of the London shoemakers in picketing obnoxious employers led to the prosecution of two of them, which was made the means of inducing the men to consent to dissolve their society, then seven years old, and return to work at once.[2] Two other shoemakers of York were convicted in the same year for the crime of "combining to raise the price of their labour in making shoes, and refusing to make shoes under a certain price," and counsel said that "in every great town in the North combinations of this sort existed."[3] The coachmakers' strike of 1819 was similarly stopped, and the "Benevolent Society of Coachmakers" broken up by the conviction of the general secretary and twenty other members, who were, upon this condition, released on their own recognisances.[4] In 1819 some calico engravers in the service of a Manchester firm protested against the undue multiplication of apprentices by their employers, and enforced their protest by declining to work. For this "conspiracy" they were fined and imprisoned.[5] And though the master cutlers were allowed, with impunity, to subscribe to the Sheffield Mercantile and Manufacturing Union, which fixed the rates of wages, and brought pressure to bear on recalcitrant employers, the numerous trade clubs of the operatives were not left unmolested. In 1816 seven scissor-grinders were sentenced

[1] Bain's *Merchant and Craft Gilds of Aberdeen*, p. 261. An earlier combination of 1768 is also mentioned.

[2] R. *v.* Hammond and Webb, 2 Esp. 719; see the *Morning Chronicle* report, preserved in Place MSS. 27799—29.

[3] *Star*, November 26, 1799.

[4] R. *v.* Connell and others, *Times*, July 10, 1819.

[5] R. *v.* Ferguson and Edge, 2 St. 489.

to three months' imprisonment for belonging to what they called the "Misfortune Club," which paid out-of-work benefit, and sought to maintain the customary rates.[1]

But it was in the new textile industries that the weight of the Combination Laws was chiefly felt. White and Henson describe the Act of 1800 as being in these trades "a tremendous millstone round the necks of the local artisan, which has depressed and debased him to the earth: every act which he has attempted, every measure that he has devised to keep up or raise his wages, he has been told was illegal: the whole force of the civil power and influence of his district has been exerted against him because he was acting illegally: the magistrates, acting, as they believed, in unison with the views of the legislature, to check and keep down wages and combination, regarded, in almost every instance, every attempt on the part of the artisan to ameliorate his situation or support his station in society as a species of sedition and resistance of the Government: every committee or active man among them was regarded as a turbulent, dangerous instigator, whom it was necessary to watch and crush if possible."[2] To cite one only of the instances, it was given in evidence before Hume's Committee that in 1818 certain Bolton millowners suggested to the operative weavers that they should concert together to

[1] *Sheffield Iris*, December 17, 1816. The men's clubs often existed under the cloak of friendly societies. In the overseers' return of sick clubs, made to Parliament in 1815, the following trade friendly societies are included, many of these, at any rate, being essentially Trade Unions:—

Tailors,	with 360	members,	and £740
Braziers,	„ 664	„	„ 1768
Masons,	„ 693	„	„ 1852
Scissorsmiths,	„ 550	„	„ 1309
Filesmiths,	„ 260	„	„ 600
United Silversmiths,	„ 240	„	„ 299
Cutlers,	„ 65	„	„ 450
Grinders	„ 283		

—*Sheffield Iris*, 1815.

[2] *A Few Remarks*, &c., p. 86.

leave the employment of those who paid below the current rate. Acting on this hint a meeting of forty delegates took place, at which it was resolved to ask for the advance agreed to by the good employers. A fortnight later the president and the two secretaries were arrested, convicted of conspiracy, and imprisoned for one and two years respectively, although their employers gave evidence on the prisoners' behalf to the effect that they had themselves requested the men to attend the meeting, and had approved the resolutions passed.[1] In the following year fifteen cotton-spinners of Manchester, who had met "to receive contributions to bury their dead," under "Articles" sanctioned by Quarter Sessions in 1795, were seized in the committee-room by the police, and committed to trial for conspiracy, bail being refused. After three or four months' imprisonment they were brought to trial, the whole local bar—seven in number—being briefed against them. Collections were made in London and elsewhere (including the town of Lynn in Norfolk) for their defence. The enrolment of their club as a friendly society availed little. It was urged in court that "all societies, whether benefit societies or otherwise, were only cloaks for the people of England to conspire against the State," and most of the defendants were sentenced to varying terms of imprisonment.[2]

But the Scottish Weavers' Strike of 1812, described in the preceding chapter, is the most striking case of all. In the previous year certain cotton-spinners had been convicted of combination and imprisoned, the judge observing that there was a clear remedy in law, as the magistrates had full power and authority to fix rates of wages or settle disputes. In 1812 many of the employers refused to accept the rates which the justices had declared as fair for weaving; and all the weavers at the forty thousand looms between Aberdeen and Carlisle struck to enforce the justices' rates. The employers had already

[1] Committee on Artisans and Machinery, 1824, p. 395.
[2] See the *Gorgon* for January and February, 1819.

made overtures through the sheriff of the county for a satisfactory settlement when the Government arrested the central committee of five, who were directing the proceedings. These men were sentenced to periods of imprisonment varying from four to eighteen months; the strike failed, and the association broke up.[1] The student of the newspapers between 1800 and 1824 will find abundant record of judicial barbarities, of which the cases cited above may be taken as samples. No statistics exist as to the frequency of the prosecutions or the severity of the sentences; but it is easy to understand, from such reports as are available, the sullen resentment with which the working class suffered under these laws. Their entire repeal was a necessary preliminary to the growth among the most oppressed sections of the workers of any real power of protecting themselves, by Trade Union effort, against the degradation of their Standard of Life.

The failure of the Combination Laws to suppress the somewhat dictatorial Trade Unionism of the skilled handicraftsmen, and their efficacy in preventing the growth of permanent Unions among other sections of the workers, is explained by class distinctions, now passed away or greatly modified, which prevailed at the beginning of the present century. To-day, when we speak of "the aristocracy of labour," we include under that heading the organised miners and factory operatives of the North on the same superior footing as the skilled handicraftsman. In 1800 they were at opposite extremes of the social scale in the wage-earning class, the operative and the miner being then further removed from the handicraftsman than the docker or agricultural labourer is from the Lancashire cotton-spinner or Northumberland hewer of to-day. The skilled artisans formed, at any rate in London, an intermediate class between the shopkeeper and the great mass of unorganised labourers or operatives in the new machine industries. The substantial fees demanded all through the

[1] Second Report of Committee on Artisans and Machinery, 1824, p. 62.

eighteenth century for apprenticeship to the "crafts" had secured to the members and their eldest sons a virtual monopoly.[1] Even after the repeal of the laws requiring a formal apprenticeship some time had to elapse before the supply of this class of handicraftsmen overtook the growing demand. Thus we gather from the surviving records that these trades have never been more completely organised in London than between 1810 and 1820.[2] We find the London hatters, coopers, curriers, compositors, and shipwrights maintaining earnings which, upon their own showing, amounted to the comparatively large sum of thirty to fifty shillings per week. At the same period the Lancashire weaver or the Leicester hosier, in full competition with steam-power and its accompaniment of female and child labour, could, even when fully employed, earn barely ten shillings. We see this difference in the Standard of Life reflected in the characters of the combinations formed by the two classes.

In the skilled handicrafts, long accustomed to corporate government, we find, even under repressive laws, no unlawful oaths, seditious emblems, or other common paraphernalia of secret societies. The London Brushmakers,

[1] Throughout the century it seems to have been customary in most handicrafts for the artisan to be allowed the privilege of apprenticing one son, usually the eldest, free of charge. For other boys, especially for the sons of parents not belonging to the trade, a fee of £5 to £20 was exacted by the employer. The present secretary of the Old Amicable Society of Woolstaplers declares that, as his brother had already entered the trade, his father had to pay £100 for his indentures.

[2] To take, for instance, the cabinetmakers and millwrights. When Lovett came to London in 1819 he found that he could not get employment without joining the Union. For the last fifty years it is doubtful whether one-fifth of the London carpenters or cabinetmakers have, at any time, been in the Trade Union ranks. (*Life of William Lovett*, by himself.) The millwrights at the beginning of the century were so strongly organised that when Fairbairn (after being actually engaged at Rennie's works) was refused admission into their society, he was driven to tramp out of London in search of work in a non-union district. (*Life of Sir William Fairbairn*, by himself. London, 1877, pp. 89, 92.)

whose Union apparently dates from the early part of the eighteenth century, expressly insisted "that no person shall be admitted a member who is not well affected to his present Majesty and the Protestant Succession, and in good health and of a respectable character." But this loyalty was not inconsistent with their subscribing to the funds of the 1831 agitation for the Reform Bill.[1] The prevailing tone of the superior workmen down to 1848 was, in fact, strongly Radical; and their leaders took a prominent part in all the working-class politics of the time. From their ranks came such organisers as Place, Lovett, and Gast.[2] But wherever we have been able to gain any idea of their proceedings, their trade clubs were free from anything that could now be conceived as political sedition. It was these clubs of handicraftsmen

[1] *Articles of the Society of Journeymen Brushmakers, held at the sign of the Craven Head, Drury Lane* (London, 1806); Minutes, April 27, 1831.

[2] John Gast, a shipwright of Deptford, was evidently one of the ablest Trade Unionists of his time. We first hear of him in 1802, as the author of a striking pamphlet entitled *A Vindication of the Conduct of the Shipwrights during the late disputes with their Employers* (London, 1802, 38 pp.). In 1818 he put forward the first recorded proposal for a general workmen's organisation, as distinguished from separate trade clubs; and his *Articles of the Philanthropic Hercules for the Mutual Support of the Labouring Mechanics*, which were printed in the *Gorgon*, attracted the attention of Francis Place, who described him (Place MSS. 27819—23) as having "long been secretary to the Shipwrights' Club: he was a steady, respectable man. He had formed several associations of working men, but had been unable to keep up any one of them." He became one of Place's most useful allies in the agitation for a repeal of the Combination Laws, and when, in 1825, their re-enactment was threatened, his "committee of trades delegates" was Place's strongest support. Gast was the leading spirit in the establishment of the *Trades Newspaper*, in July, 1825, and became chairman of the committee of management, as well as a frequent contributor. In the same year he was actively engaged in the shipwrights' struggle for a "Book of Rates," or definite list of piecework prices, and the energy with which he counteracted the design of the Board of Admiralty, of allowing the London shipbuilders to borrow men from the Portsmouth Navy Yard, contributed mainly to the success of the fight.

that formed the backbone of the various "central committees" which dealt with the main topics of Trade Unionism during the next thirty years. They it was who furnished such assistance as was given by working men to the movement for the repeal of the Combination Laws. And their influence gave a certain dignity and stability to the Trade Union Movement, without which, under hostile governments, it could never have emerged from the petulant rebellions of hunger-strikes and machine-breaking.

The principal effect of the Combination Laws on these well-organised handicrafts in London, Liverpool, Dublin, and perhaps other towns, was to make the internal discipline more rigid and the treatment of non-unionists more arbitrary. Place describes how "in these societies there are some few individuals who possess the confidence of their fellows, and when any matter relating to the trade has been talked over, either at the club or in a separate room, or in a workshop or a yard, and the matter has become notorious, these men are expected to direct what shall be done, and they do direct—simply by a hint. On this the men act; and one and all support those who may be thrown out of work or otherwise inconvenienced. If matters were to be discussed as gentlemen seem to suppose they must be, no resolution would ever be come to. The influence of the men alluded to would soon cease if the law were repealed. It is the law and the law alone which causes the confidence of the men to be given to their leaders. Those who direct are not known to the body, and not one man in twenty, perhaps, knows the person of any one who directs. It is a rule among them to ask no questions, and another rule among them who know most, either to give no answer if questioned, or an answer to mislead." [1]

In the new machine industries, on the other hand, the repeated reductions of wages, the rapid alterations of processes, and the substitution of women and children for adult

[1] Place MSS. 27800—195.

male workers had gradually reduced the workers to a condition of miserable poverty. The reports of Parliamentary committees, from 1800 onward, contain a dreary record of the steady degradation of the Standard of Life in the textile industries. "The sufferings of persons employed in the cotton manufacture," Place writes of this period, "were beyond credibility: they were drawn into combinations, betrayed, prosecuted, convicted, sentenced, and monstrously severe punishments inflicted on them: they were reduced to and kept in the most wretched state of existence."[1] Their employers, instead of being, as in the older handicrafts, little more than master workmen, recognising the customary Standard of Life of their journeymen, were often capitalist *entrepreneurs*, devoting their whole energies to the commercial side of the business, and leaving their managers to buy labour in the market at the cheapest possible rate. This labour was recruited from all localities and many different occupations. It was brigaded and controlled by despotic laws, enforced by numerous fines and disciplinary deductions. Cases of gross tyranny and heartless cruelty are not wanting. Without a common standard, a common tradition, or mutual confidence, the workers in the new mills were helpless against their masters. Their ephemeral combinations and frequent strikes were, as a rule, only passionate struggles to maintain a bare subsistence wage. In place of the steady organised resistance to encroachments maintained by the handicraftsmen, we watch, in the machine industries, the alternation of outbursts of machine-breaking and outrages, with intervals of abject submission and reckless competition with each other for employment. In the conduct of such organisation as there was, repressive laws had, with the operatives as with the London artisans, the effect of throwing great power into the hands of a few men. These leaders were implicitly obeyed in times of industrial conflict, but the repeated defeats which they were unable to avert prevented that growth of con-

[1] Place MSS. 27798—11.

fidence which is indispensable for permanent organisation.[1] Both leaders and rank and file, too, were largely implicated in political seditions, and were the victims of spies and Ministerial emissaries of all sorts. All these circumstances led to the prevalence among them of fearful oaths, mystic initiation rites, and other manifestations of a sensationalism which was sometimes puerile and sometimes criminal.

The Coalminers were in many respects even worse off than the textile workers. In Scotland they had been but lately freed from actual serfdom, the final act of emancipation not having been passed until 1799. In the North of England the "yearly bond," the truck system, and the arbitrary fines for short measure kept the underground workers in complete subjection. The result is seen in the turbulence of their frequent "sticks" or strikes, during which troops were often required to quell their violence. The great strike of 1810 was carried on by an oath-bound confederacy recruited by the practice of "brothering," "so named because the members of the union bound themselves by a most solemn oath to obey the orders of the brotherhood, under the penalty of being stabbed through the heart or of having their bowels ripped up."[2]

Notwithstanding these differences between various classes of workers, the growing sense of solidarity among the whole body of wage-earners rises into special prominence during this period of tyranny and repression. The trades in which it was usual for men to tramp from place to place in search of employment had long possessed, as we have seen, some kind of loose federal organisation extending throughout the country. In spite of the law of 1797 forbidding the existence of "corresponding societies," the

[1] See, on all these points, the evidence given before the Committee on Artisans and Machinery, 1824; especially that of Richmond.

[2] Evidence of a colliery engineer in the Newcastle district before Committee on Combination Laws, 1825; summarised in *Report on Trade Societies*, 1860, by Social Science Association. See also *The Miners of Northumberland and Durham*, by Richard Fynes, pp. 12–16 (Blyth, 1873).

various federal organisations of Curriers, Hatters, Calico-printers, Woolcombers, Woolstaplers, and other handicraftsmen kept up constant correspondence on trade matters, and raised money for common trade purposes. In some cases there existed an elaborate national organisation, with geographical districts, and annual delegate meetings like that of the Calico-printers who were arrested by the Bolton constables in 1818. The rules of the Papermakers,[1] which certainly date from 1803, provide for the division of England into five districts, with detailed arrangements for representation and collective action. This national organisation was, notwithstanding repressive laws, occasionally very effective. We need cite only one instance, furnished by the Liverpool Ropemakers in 1823. When a certain firm attempted to put labourers to the work, the local society of ropespinners informed it that this was "contrary to the regulations of the trade," and withdrew all their members. The employers, failing to get men in Liverpool, sent to Hull and Newcastle, but found that the Ropespinners' Society had already apprised the local trade clubs at those towns. The firm then imported "blacklegs" from Glasgow, who were met on arrival by the local unionists, inveigled to a "trade club-house," and alternately threatened and cajoled out of their engagements. Finally the head of the firm went to London to purchase yarn; but the London workmen, finding that the yarn was for a "struck shop," refused to complete the order. The last resource of the employers was an indictment at the Sessions for combination, but a Liverpool jury, in the teeth of the evidence and the judge's summing up, gave a verdict of acquittal.[2]

This solidarity was not confined to the members of a particular trade. The masters are always complaining

[1] See Appendix to Report of Select Committee on Combinations, 1825.

[2] R. *v.* Yates and others, Liverpool Sessions, August 10, 1823. See newspaper report preserved in Place MSS. 27804—154.

that one trade supports another, and old account books of Trade Unions for this period abound with entries of sums contributed in aid of disputes in other trades, either in the same town or elsewhere. Thus the small society of London Goldbeaters, during the three years 1810–12, lent or gave substantial sums, amounting in all to £200, to no fewer than fourteen other trades.[1] A picturesque illustration of this brotherly help in need occurs in the account of an appeal to the Pontefract Quarter Sessions by certain Sheffield cutlers against their conviction for combination :—"The appellants were in court, but hour after hour passed, and no counsel moved the case. The reason was a want of funds for the purpose. At last, whilst in court, a remittance from the clubs in Manchester, to the amount of one hundred pounds, arrived, and then the counsel was feed, and the case, which, but for the arrival of the money from this town, must have dropped in that stage, was proceeded with."[2] And although the

[1] The entries in this old cash-book are of some interest :—

		£	s	d
May 29, 1810	Paid ye Brushmakers	15	0	0
	Lent ye Brushmakers.....	10	0	0
	Paid ye Friziers	20	0	0
June 26, 1810	Paid ye Silversmiths	10	0	0
	Expenses to Pipemakers.....		4	10
July 24, 1810	Paid ye Braziers	10	10	0
	Paid ye Bookbinders	10	0	0
	Paid ye Curriers	10	0	0
Aug. 21, 1810	Lent ye Bit and Spurmakers	5	0	0
	Lent ye Scalemakers	5	0	0
	Paid ye Leathergrounders ...	5	0	0
Oct. 26, 1810	Paid ye Tinplate Workers...	30	0	0
Dec. 11, 1810	Lent ye Ropemakers	10	0	0
May 30, 1811	Received of Scale Beam-makers	5	0	0
June 25, 1811	Expenses with Papermakers		12	6
July 20, 1812	Lent ye Sadlers	10	0	0
Oct. 12, 1812	Paid to Millwrights	50	0	0
Dec. 7, 1812	Borrowed from the Musical Instrument-makers	2	0	0

[2] See report in the *Manchester Exchange Herald*, about 1818, preserved in Place MSS. 27799[2]—156.

day of Trades Councils had not yet come, it was a common thing for the various trade societies of a particular town to unite in sending witnesses to Parliamentary Committees, preparing petitions to the House of Commons and paying counsel to support their case, engaging solicitors to prosecute offending employers, and collecting subscriptions for strikes.[1] This tendency to form joint committees of local trades was, as we shall see, greatly strengthened in the agitation against the Combination Laws from 1823 to 1825. With the final abandonment of all legislative protection of the Standard of Life, and the complete divorce of the worker from the instruments of production, the wage-earners in the various industrial centres became, indeed, ever more conscious of the widening of the old separate trade disputes into "the class war" which characterises the present century

It is difficult to-day to realise the naïve surprise with which the employers of that time regarded the practical development of working-class solidarity. The master witnesses before Parliamentary Committees, and the judges in sentencing workmen for combination, are constantly found reciting instances of mutual help to prove the existence of a widespread "conspiracy" against the dominant classes. That the London Tailors should send money to the Glasgow Weavers, or the Goldbeaters to the Ropespinners, seemed, to the middle and upper classes, little short of a crime.

The movement for a repeal of the Combination Laws began in a period of industrial dislocation and severe political repression. The economic results of the long war, culminating in the comparatively low prices of the peace, led, in 1816, to an almost universal reduction of wages throughout the country. In open defiance of the

[1] See, for instance, the witnesses delegated by the Glasgow and Manchester trades to the Select Committee on Petitions of Artisans, &c., report of June 13, 1811; or the joint action of the Yorkshire and West of England Woollen-workers given in evidence before the Select Committee of 1806. These cases are typical of many others.

law the masters, in many instances, deliberately combined in agreements to pay lower rates. This agreement was not confined to the employers in a particular trade, who may have been confronted by organised bodies of journeymen, but extended, in some cases, to all employers of labour in a particular locality. The landowners and farmers of Tiverton, for instance, at a "numerous and respectable meeting at the Town Hall" in 1816, resolved "that, in consequence of the low price of provisions," not more than certain specified wages should be given to smiths, carpenters, masons, thatchers, or masons' labourers.[1] The Compositors, Coopers, Shoemakers, Carpenters, and many other trades record serious reductions of wages at this period. In these cases the masters justified their action on the ground that, owing to the fall of prices, the Standard of Life of the journeymen would not be depressed. But in the great staple industries there ensued a cutting competition between employers to secure orders in a falling market, their method being to undersell each other by beating down wages below subsistence level —an operation often aided by the practice, then common, of supplementing insufficient earnings out of the Poor Rate. This produced such ruinous results that local protests were soon made. At Leicester the authorities decided to maintain the men's "Statement Price" by agreeing to wholly support out of a voluntary fund those who could not get work at the full rates. This was bitterly resented by the neighbouring employers, who seriously contemplated indicting the lord-lieutenant, mayor, aldermen, clergy, and other subscribers for criminal conspiracy to keep up wages.[2] And in 1820 a public meeting of the ratepayers of Sheffield protested against

[1] Printed handbill signed by thirty-two persons, issued in the summer of 1816, preserved in Place MSS. 27799—141. Place has also preserved the rejoinder of the workmen, which is unsigned, as he notes, for fear of prosecution.

[2] *The Stocking Makers' Monitor*, January, 1818; *A few Remarks on the State of the Law, &c.*, by White and Henson, p. 88; *An Appeal to the Public on the subject of the Framework Knitters' Fund*, by the Rev

the "evil of parish pay to supplement earnings," and recommended employers to revert to the uniform price list which the men had gained in 1810.[1] Finally we have the employers themselves publicly denouncing the ruinous extent to which the cutting of wages had been carried. A declaration dated June 16, 1819, and signed by fourteen Lancashire manufacturers, regrets that they have been compelled by the action of a few competitors to lower wages to the present rates, and strongly condemns any further reduction; whilst twenty-five of the most eminent calico-printing firms append an emphatic approval of the protest, and state "that the system of paying such extremely low wages for manufacturing labour is injurious to the trade at large."[2] At Coventry the ribbon manufacturers combined with the Weavers' Provident Union to maintain a general adherence to the agreed list of prices, and, in 1819, subscribed together no less than £16,000 to cover the cost of proceedings with this object. This combination formed the subject of an indictment at Warwick Assizes, which put an end to the association, the remaining funds being handed over to the local "Streets Commissioners" for paving the city. These protests and struggles of the better employers were in vain. Rates were reduced and strikes occurred all over the country, and were met, not by redress or sympathy, but by an outburst of prosecutions and sentences of more than the usual ferocity. The common law and ancient statutes were ruthlessly used to supplement the Combination Acts, often by strained constructions. The Scotch judges in particular, as an eminent Scotch jurist declared to the Parliamentary Committee in 1824, applied the criminal procedure of Scotland to

Robert Hall (Leicester, 1819); Cobbett's *Weekly Register*, vol. xxxix.; *A Reply to the Principal Objections advanced by Cobbett and Others*, by the Rev. Robert Hall (Leicester, 1821).

[1] *Proceedings at a public meeting of the inhabitants of the Township of Sheffield, held at the Town Hall, March* 15, 1820 (Sheffield, 1820, 16 pp.).

[2] *Times*, August 5, 1819.

cases of simple combination, from 1813 to 1819, in a way that he, on becoming Lord Advocate, refused to countenance.[1] The workers, on attempting some spasmodic preparations for organised political agitation, were further coerced, in 1819, by the infamous "Six Acts," which at one blow suppressed practically all public meetings, enabled the magistrate to search for arms, subjected all working-class publications to the crushing stamp duty, and rendered more stringent the law relating to seditious libels. The whole system of repression which had characterised the statesmanship of the Regency culminated at this period in a tyranny not exceeded by any of the monarchs of the "Holy Alliance." The effect of this tyranny was actually to shield the Combination Laws by turning the more energetic and enlightened working-class leaders away from all specific reforms to a thorough revolution of the whole system of Parliamentary representation. Hence there was no popular movement whatever for the repeal of the Combination Laws. If we were writing the history of the English working class instead of that of the Trade Union Movement, we should find in William Cobbett or "Orator" Hunt, in Samuel Bamford or William Lovett, a truer representative of the current aspirations of the English artisan at this time than in the man who now came unexpectedly on the scene to devise and carry into effect the Trade Union Emancipation of 1824.

Francis Place was a master tailor who had created a successful business in a shop at Charing Cross. Before setting up for himself he had worked as a journeyman breeches-maker, and had organised combinations in his own and other trades. After 1818 he left the conduct of the business to his son, and devoted his keenly practical intellect and extraordinary persistency first to the repeal of the Combination Laws, and next to the Reform Movement. In social theory he was a pupil of Bentham and

[1] Evidence of Sir William Rae, Bart., before Select Committee on Artisans and Machinery, 1824, p. 486.

James Mill, and his ideal may be summed up as political Democracy with industrial liberty, or, as we should now say, thoroughgoing Radical Individualism. No one who has closely studied his life and work will doubt that, within the narrow sphere to which his unswerving practicality confined him, he was the most remarkable politician of his age. His chief merit lay in his thorough understanding of the art of getting things done. In agitation, permeation, wire-pulling, Parliamentary lobbying, the drafting of resolutions, petitions, and bills—in short, of all those artifices by which a popular movement is first created and then made effective on the Parliamentary system—he was an inventor and tactician of the first order. Above all, he possessed in perfection the rare quality of permitting other people to carry off the credit of his work, and thus secured for his proposals willing promoters and supporters, some of the leading Parliamentary figures of the time owing all their knowledge on his questions to the briefs with which he supplied them. The invaluable collection of manuscript records left by him, now in the British Museum, prove that modesty had nothing to do with his contemptuous readiness to leave the trophies of victory to his pawns provided his end was attained. He was thoroughly appreciative of the fact that in every progressive movement his shop at Charing Cross was the real centre of power when the Parliamentary stage of a progressive movement was reached. It remained, from 1807 down to about 1834, the recognised meeting-place of all the agitators of the time.

It was in watching the effect of the Combination Laws in his own trade that Place became converted to their repeal. The special laws of 1720 and 1767, fixing the wages of journeymen tailors, as well as the general law of 1800 against all combinations, had failed to regulate wages, to prevent strikes, or to hinder those masters who wished in times of pressure to engage skilled men, from offering the bribe of high piecework rates, or even time wages in excess of the legal limit. Place gave evidence

as a master tailor before the Select Committee of the House of Commons which inquired into the subject in 1810; and it was chiefly his weighty testimony in favour of freedom of contract that averted the fresh legal restrictions which a combination of employers was then openly promoting.[1] This experience of the practical freedom of employers to combine intensified Place's sense of the injustice of denying a like freedom to the journeymen, whilst the brutal prosecution of the compositors of the *Times* in the same year brought home to his mind the severity of the law. Four years later (1814), as he himself tells us, he "began to work seriously to procure a repeal of the laws against combinations of workmen, but for a long time made no visible progress." The employers were firmly convinced that combinations of wage-earners would succeed in securing a great rise of wages, to the serious detriment of profits. The politicians were equally certain that Trade Union action would raise prices, and thus undermine the foreign trade upon which the prosperity and international influence of England depended. The working men themselves afforded in the first instance no assistance. Those who had suffered legal persecution were hopeless of redress from an unreformed Parliament, and offered him no support. One trade, the Spitalfields silkweavers, supported the Government because they enjoyed what they deemed to be the advantage of legal protection from the lowering of wages by competition.[2] Others were suspicious of the intervention of one who

[1] Place MSS. 27798—8, 12, &c.; *Times*, November 9, 1810.

[2] When Place, in 1824, urged the "Committee of Engine Silk-weavers" of Spitalfields to petition for a repeal of the Combination Laws, the meeting "Resolved, that protected as we have been for years under the salutary laws and wisdom of the Legislature, and being completely unapprehensive of any sort of combination on our part, we cannot therefore take any sort of notice of the invitation held out by Mr. Place." When this resolution was put by the chairman, "an unanimous burst of applause followed, with a multitude of voices exclaiming, 'The law, cling to the law, it will protect us!'" Place MSS 27800—52; *Morning Chronicle*, February 9, 1824.

was himself an employer, and who had not yet gained any recognition as a friend to labour. But Place was undismayed by hostility and indifference. Knowing that with an English public the strength of his cause would lie, not in any abstract reasoning or appeal to natural rights, but in an enumeration of actual cases of injustice, he made a point of obtaining the particulars of every trade dispute. He intervened, as he says, in every strike, sometimes as a mediator, sometimes as an ally of the journeymen. He opened up a voluminous correspondence with Trade Unions throughout the kingdom, and wrote innumerable letters to the newspapers. In 1818 he secured a useful medium in the *Gorgon*,[1] a little working-class political newspaper, started by one Wade, a woolcomber, and subsidised by Bentham and Place himself. This gained him his two most important disciples, eventually the chief instruments of his work, J. R. McCulloch and Joseph Hume. McCulloch, afterwards to gain fame as an economist, was at that time the editor of the *Scotsman*, the most important of the provincial newspapers. A powerful article based on Place's facts, which he contributed to the *Edinburgh Review* in 1823, secured many converts; and his constant advocacy gave Place's idea a weight and notoriety which it had hitherto lacked. Joseph Hume was an even more important ally. His acknowledged position in the House of Commons as one of the leaders of the growing party of Philosophic Radicalism gained for the repeal movement a steadily growing support with advanced members of Parliament. Among a certain section in the House the desirability of freedom of combination began to be discussed; presently it was considered practicable; and soon many came to regard it as an inevitable outcome of their political creed. In 1822 Place thought the time ripe for action; and Hume accordingly gave notice of his intention to bring in a Bill to repeal all the laws against combinations.

Place's manuscripts and letters contain a graphic

[1] The volumes for 1818–19 are in the British Museum.

account of the wire-pullings and manipulations of the next two years. In these contemporary pictures of the inner workings of the Parliamentary system we watch Hume cajoling Huskisson and Peel into granting him a Select Committee, staving off the less tactful proposals of a rival M.P.,[1] and finally, in February, 1824, packing the Committee of Inquiry at length appointed. Hume, with some art, had included in his motion three distinct subjects, the emigration of artisans, the exportation of machinery, and combinations of workmen, all of which were forbidden by law. To Place and Hume the repeal of the Combination Laws was the main object; but Huskisson and his colleagues regarded the Committee as primarily charged with an inquiry into the possibility of encouraging the rising manufacture of machinery, which was seriously hampered by the prohibition of sales to foreign countries. Huskisson tried to induce Hume to omit from the Committee's reference all mention of the Combination Laws, evidently regarding them as only a minor and unimportant part of the inquiry. But Place and Hume were now masters of the situation; and for the next few months they devoted their whole time to the management of the Committee. At first no one seems to

[1] In 1823 George White, a "clerk of committees" of the House of Commons, had formed an alliance with Gravener Henson, a bobbin-net maker of Nottingham, who had long been a leader of the framework knitters' combinations. Together they prepared an elaborate bill repealing all the Combination Acts, and substituting a complicated machinery for regulating piecework and settling industrial disputes. Some of these proposals were meritorious anticipations of subsequent factory legislation; but the time was not ripe for such measures. This bill, promptly introduced by Peter Moore, the member for Coventry, had the effect of scaring some timid legislators, and especially alarming the Front Bench. Hume was at a loss to know how to act; but Place, in a letter displaying great political sagacity, advised him to baulk the rival bill by putting its author on the Committee of Inquiry, explaining that "Moore is not a man to be put aside. The only way to put him down is to let him talk his nonsense in the Committee, where, being outvoted, he will be less of an annoyance in the House." See Place MSS. 27798—12.

have had any idea that its proceedings were going to be of any moment; and no trouble was taken by the Ministry with regard to its composition. "It was with difficulty," writes Place, "that Mr. Hume could obtain the names of twenty-one members to compose the Committee; but when it had sat three days, and had become both popular and amusing, members contrived to be put upon it; and at length it consisted of forty-eight members." [1] Hume, who was appointed chairman, appears to have taken into his own hands the entire management of the proceedings. A circular explaining the objects of the inquiry was sent to the mayor or other public officer of forty provincial towns, and appeared in the principal local newspapers. Meanwhile Place, who had by this time acquired the full confidence of the chief leaders of the working class, secured the attendance of artisan witnesses from all parts of the kingdom. Read in the light of Place's private records and daily correspondence with Hume, the proceedings of this "Committee on Artisans and Machinery" reveal an almost perfect example of political manipulation. Although no hostile witness was denied a hearing, it was evidently arranged that the employers who were favourable to repeal should be examined first, and that the preponderance of evidence should be on their side. And whilst those interests which would have been antagonistic to the repeal were neither professionally represented nor deliberately organised, the men's case was marshalled with admirable skill by Place, and fully brought out by Hume's examination. Thus the one acted as the Trade Unionists' Parliamentary solicitor, and the other as their unpaid counsel.[2]

Place himself tells us how he proceeded: "The dele-

[1] Place MSS. 27798—30.

[2] Place offered to act as Hume's "assistant"; but the members of the Committee, whose suspicions had been aroused, refused to permit him to remain in the room, on the double ground that he was not a member of the House, or even a gentleman!

gates from the working people had reference to me, and I opened my house to them. Thus I had all the town and country delegates under my care. I heard the story which every one of these men had to tell, I examined and cross-examined them, took down the leading particulars of each case, and then arranged the matter as briefs for Mr. Hume, and as a rule, for the guidance of the witnesses, a copy was given to each. . . . Each brief contained the principal questions and answers. . . . That for Mr. Hume was generally accompanied by an appendix of documents arranged in order, with a short account of such proceedings as were necessary to put Mr. Hume in possession of the whole case. Thus he was enabled to go on with considerable ease, and to anticipate or rebut objections." [1]

The Committee sat in private; but Hume's numerous letters to Place show how carefully the latter was kept posted up in all the proceedings: "As the proceedings of the Committee were printed from day to day for the use of the members, I had a copy sent to me by Mr. Hume, which I indexed on paper ruled in many columns, each column having an appropriate head or number. I also wrote remarks on the margins of the printed evidence; this was copied daily by Mr. Hume's secretary, and then returned to me. This consumed much time, but enabled Mr. Hume to have the whole mass constantly under his view; and I am very certain that less pains and care would not have been sufficient to have carried the business through." [2]

From Westminster Hall we are transported, by these private notes for Hume's use, all now preserved in the British Museum, into the back parlour of the Charing Cross shop, where the London and provincial artisan witnesses came for their instructions. "The workmen," as Place tells us, "were not easily managed. It required great care and pains not to shock their prejudices so as to prevent them doing their duty before the Committee.

[1] Place MSS. 27798—22. [2] Ibid. 27798—23.

They were filled with false notions, all attributing their distresses to wrong causes, which I, in this state of the business, dared not attempt to remove. Taxes, machinery, laws against combinations, the will of the masters, the conduct of magistrates—these were the fundamental causes of all their sorrows and privations. . . . I had to discuss everything with them most carefully, to arrange and prepare everything, and so completely did these things occupy my time that for more than three months I had hardly any rest." [1]

The result of the inquiry was as Hume and Place had ordained. A series of resolutions in favour of complete freedom of combination and liberty of emigration was adopted by the Committee, apparently without dissent.[2] A Bill to repeal all the Combination Laws and to legalise trade societies was passed rapidly through both Houses, without either debate or division. Place and Hume contrived privately to talk over and to silence the few members who were alive to the situation; and the measure passed, as Place remarks, "almost without the notice of members within or newspapers without." So quietly was the Bill smuggled through Parliament that the magistrates at a Lancashire town unwittingly sentenced certain cotton-weavers to imprisonment for combination some weeks after the laws against that crime had been repealed.[3]

Place and Hume had, however, been rather too clever. Whilst the governing classes were quite unconscious that any important alteration of law or policy had taken place, the unlooked-for success of Place's agitation produced, as Nassau Senior describes, "a great moral effect" in all the industrial centres. "It confirmed in the minds of the operatives the conviction of the justice of their cause,

[1] Place MSS. 27798—22.

[2] The question of the exportation of machinery was deferred until the next session.

[3] Letter in the *Manchester Gazette* preserved in the Place MSS. 27801—214.

tardily and reluctantly, but at last fully, conceded by the Legislature. That which was morally right in 1824 must have been so, they would reason, for fifty years before. . . . They conceived that they had extorted from the Legislature an admission that their masters must always be their rivals, and had hitherto been their oppressors, and that combinations to raise wages, and shorten the time or diminish the severity of labour, were not only innocent, but meritorious." [1] Trade Societies accordingly sprang into existence on all sides. A period of trade inflation, together with a rapid rise in the price of provisions, favoured a general increase of wages. For the next six months the newspapers are full of strikes and rumours of strikes. Serious disturbances occurred at Glasgow, where the cotton operatives committed several outrages, and a general lock-out took place. The shipping trade of the North-East Coast was temporarily paralysed by a strong combination of the seamen on the Tyne and Wear, who refused to sail except with Unionist seamen and Unionist officers. The Dublin trades, then the best organised in the kingdom, ruthlessly enforced their bye-laws for the regulation of their respective industries, and formed a joint committee, the so-called "Board of Green Cloth," whose dictates became the terror of the employers. The Sheffield operatives have to be warned that, if they persist in demanding double the former wages for only three days a week work, the whole industry of the town will be ruined.[2] The London shipwrights insisted on what their employers considered the preposterous demand for a "book of rates" for piecework. The London coopers demanded a revision of their wages, which led to a long-sustained conflict. In fact, as a provincial newspaper remarked a little later, "it is no longer a particular class of journeymen at some single point that have been induced to commence a strike for an advance of

[1] MS. Report of Nassau Senior to Lord Melbourne on Trade Combinations (1831, unpublished, in Home Office Library).

[2] *Sheffield Iris*, April 2, 1825.

wages, but almost the whole body of the mechanics in the kingdom are combined in the general resolution to impose terms on their employers." [1]

The opening of the session of 1825 found the employers throughout the country thoroughly aroused. Hume and Place had in vain preached moderation, and warned the Unions of the danger of a reaction. The great shipowning and shipbuilding interest, which has throughout the century preserved intact its reputation for unswerving hostility to Trade Unionism, had possession of the ear of Huskisson, then President of the Board of Trade and member for Liverpool. Early in the session he moved for a committee of inquiry into the conduct of the workmen and the effect of the recent Act, which, he complained, had been smuggled through the House without his attention having been called to the fact that it went far beyond the mere repeal of the special statutes against combinations.[2] This time the composition of the committee was not left to chance, or to Hume's manipulation. The members were, as Place complains, selected almost exclusively from the Ministerial benches, twelve out of the thirty being placemen, and many being representatives of rotten boroughs. Huskisson,[3] Peel, and the Attorney-General themselves took part in its proceedings; Wallace, the Master of the Mint, was made chairman, and Hume alone represented the workmen. Huskisson regarded the Committee as merely a

[1] *Sheffield Mercury*, October 8, 1825; see the *Manchester Guardian* for August, 1824, to a similar effect.

[2] Later in the year Lord Liverpool, the Prime Minister, and Lord Eldon, the Lord Chancellor, protested in debate that they had been quite unaware of the passing of the Act, and that they would never have assented to it.

[3] The Annual Register for 1825 gives a fuller report of Huskisson's speech than Hansard's Parliamentary Debates. Further particulars are supplied in George White's *Abstract of the Act repealing the Laws against Combinations of Workmen* (London, 1824) and in Place's *Observations on Mr. Huskisson's Speech on the Law relating to Combinations of Workmen*, by F. P. (London, 1825, 32 pp.).

formal preliminary to the introduction of the Bill which the shipping interest had drafted,[1] under which Trade Unions, and even Friendly Societies, would have been impossible. For the inner history of this Committee we have to rely on Place's voluminous memoranda, and Hume's brief notes to him. According to these, the original intention was to call only a few employers as witnesses, to exclude all testimony on the other side, and promptly to report in favour of the repressive measure already prepared. Place, himself an expert in such tactics, met them by again supplying Hume daily with detailed information which enabled him to cross-examine the masters and expose their exaggerations. And, if Place's account of the animus of the Committee and the Ministers against himself be somewhat highly coloured, we have ample evidence of the success with which he guided the alarmed Trade Unions to take effectual action in their own defence. His friend John Gast, secretary to the London Shipwrights, called for two delegates from each trade in the metropolis, and formed a committee which kept up a persistent agitation against the re-enactment of the Combination Laws. Similar committees were formed at Manchester and Glasgow by the cotton operatives, at Sheffield by the cutlers, and at Newcastle by the seamen and shipwrights. Petitions, the draft of which appears in Place's manuscripts, poured in to the Select Committee and to both Houses. If we are to believe Place, the passages leading to the committee-room were carefully kept thronged by crowds of workmen insisting on being examined to rebut the accusations of the employers, and waylaying individual members to whom they explained their grievances. All this energy on the part of the Unions was, as Place observes, in marked contrast with their apathy the year before. The workmen, though they had done nothing to gain their

[1] This included a provision to forbid the subscription of any funds to a trade or other association, unless some magistrate approved its objects and became its treasurer.

freedom of association, were determined to maintain it. Doherty, the leader of the Lancashire Cotton-spinners, writing to Place in the heat of the agitation, declared that any attempt at a re-enactment of the Combination Laws would result in a widespread revolutionary movement.[1] The nett result of the inquiry was, on the whole, satisfactory. The Select Committee found themselves compelled to hear a certain number of workman witnesses, who testified to the good results of the Act of the previous year. The shipowners' Bill was abandoned, and the House of Commons was recommended to pass a measure which nominally re-established the general common-law prohibition of combinations, but specifically excepted from prosecution associations for the purpose of regulating wages or hours of labour. The master shipbuilders were furious at this virtual defeat. The handbill is still extant which they distributed at the doors of the House of Commons on the day of the second reading of the emasculated Bill.[2] They declared that its provisions were quite insufficient to save their industry from destruction. If Trade Unions were to be allowed to exist at all, they demanded that these bodies should be compelled to render full accounts of their expenditure to the justices in Quarter Sessions, and that any diversion of monies raised for friendly society purposes should be severely punished. They pleaded, moreover, that at any rate all federal or combined action among trade clubs should be prohibited. Place and Hume, on the other hand, were afraid, and subsequent events proved with what good grounds, that the narrow limits of the trade combinations allowed by the Bill, and still more the vague terms "molest" and "obstruct," which it contained, would be used as weapons against Trade Unionism. The Government, however, held to the draft of the Committee. The shipbuilders secured nothing. Hume induced Ministers to give way on some verbal points, and took three divisions in vain protest against the measure. Place carried on the agita-

[1] Place MSS. 27803—299. [2] Ibid. 27803—212.

tion to the House of Lords, and extracted the concession of a right of appeal to Quarter Sessions, which was afterwards to prove of some practical value.

The Act of 1825 (6 Geo. IV. c. 129), though it fell short of the measure which Place and Hume had so skilfully piloted through Parliament the year before, effected a real emancipation. The right of collective bargaining, involving the power to withhold labour from the market by concerted action, was for the first time expressly established. And although many struggles remained to be fought before the legal freedom of Trade Unionism was fully secured, no overt attempt has since been made to render illegal this first condition of Trade Union action.

It is a suggestive feature of this, as of other great reforms, that the men whose faith in its principle, and whose indefatigable industry and resolution carried it through, were the only ones who proved altogether mistaken as to its practical consequences. If we read the lesson of the century aright, the manufacturer was not wholly wrong when he protested that liberty of combination must make the workers the ultimate authority in industry, although his narrow fear as to the driving away of capital and commercial skill, and the reduction of the nation to a dead level of anarchic pauperism, were entirely contradicted by subsequent developments. And the workman, to whom liberty to combine opened up vistas of indefinite advancement of his class at the expense of his oppressors, was, we now see, looking rightly forward, though he, too, greatly miscalculated the distance before him, and overlooked many arduous stages of the journey. But what is to be said of the forecasts of Place and the Philosophic Radicals? "Combinations," writes Place to Sir Francis Burdett in 1825, "will soon cease to exist. Men have been kept together for long periods only by the oppressions of the laws; these being repealed, combinations will lose the matter which cements them into masses, and they will fall to pieces. All will be as orderly

as even a Quaker could desire. . . . He knows nothing of the working people who can suppose that, when left at liberty to act for themselves without being driven into permanent associations by the oppression of the laws, they will continue to contribute money for distant and doubtful experiments, for uncertain and precarious benefits. If let alone, combinations—excepting now and then, and for particular purposes under peculiar circumstances—will cease to exist." [1]

It is pleasant to feel that Place was right in regarding the repeal as beneficial and worthy of his best efforts in its support; but in every less general respect he and his allies were as wrong as it was possible for them to be. The first disappointment, however, came to the workmen. Over and over again they had found their demands for higher wages parried only by the employers' resort to the law, and they now saw the way clear before them for an organised attack upon their masters' profits. Trades which had not yet enjoyed permanent combinations began to organise in the expectation of raising their wages to the level of those of their more fortunate brethren. The Sheffield shop-assistants combined to petition for early closing.[2] The cotton-weavers of Lancashire met in delegate meeting at Manchester in August, 1824, to establish a permanent organisation to prevent reductions in prices and to secure a uniform wage, the notice stating that it was by their secret combinations that the tailors, joiners, and spinners had succeeded in keeping up wages.[3] In the same month the Manchester dyers turned out for an advance, and paraded the streets, which they had placarded with their proposals.[4] The Glasgow calender-men struck for a regular twelve hours' day, and carried their point. The success of the shipwrights on the north-

[1] June 25, 1825. 27798—57.
[2] *Sheffield Iris*, September 27, 1825.
[3] Handbill preserved in Place MSS. 27803—255.
[4] *Manchester Guardian*, August 7, 1824; see also *On Combinations of Trades* (London, 1830).

east coast induced the London shipwrights to convert their "Committee for conducting the Business in the North" into the "Shipwrights' Provident Union of the Port of London," which still exists.[1]

"Such is the rage for union societies," reports the *Sheffield Iris* of July 12, 1825, "that the sea apprentices in Sunderland have actually had regular meetings every day last week on the moor, and have resolved not to go on board their ships unless the owners will allow them tea and sugar." Local trade clubs expanded, like the Manchester Steam-Engine Makers' Society, into national organisations. In other cases corresponding clubs developed into federal bodies. The object in all these cases was the same. The preamble to the first rules of the Friendly Society of Operative House Carpenters and Joiners of Great Britain, which was established by a delegate meeting in London in 1827, states that, "for the amelioration of the evils attendant on our trade, and the advancement of the rights and privileges of labour," it was considered "absolutely necessary that a firm compact of interests should exist between the whole of the operative carpenters and joiners throughout the United Kingdom of Great Britain."[2]

Nor was it only in the multiplication of trade societies that the expansion showed itself. A committee of delegates from the London trades meeting during the summer of 1825 set on foot the *Trades Newspaper and Mechanics' Weekly Journal*, a sevenpenny stamped paper, with the motto, "They helped every one his neighbour, and every one said to his brother, 'Be of good cheer.'"[3] A vigorous attempt was made to promote Trade Union organisation

[1] This is expressly stated in the preamble to the rules adopted at the meeting on August 16, 1824, and recorded in the first minute book.

[2] This society afterwards developed into the existing General Union of Carpenters and Joiners of Great Britain.

[3] Two rival journals, *The Journeyman's and Artisan's London and Provincial Chronicle*, and *The Mechanic's Newspaper and Trade Journal*, were also started, but soon expired.

in all industries, and to bring to bear a body of instructed working-class opinion upon the political situation of the day.[1]

The high hopes of which all this exultant activity was the symptom were soon rudely dashed. The year 1825 closed with a financial panic and widespread commercial disaster. The four years that followed were years of contraction and distress. Thousands of workmen in all trades lost their employment, and wages were reduced all round. In many manufacturing districts the operatives were kept from starvation only by public subscriptions.[2] Strikes, under these circumstances, ended invariably in disaster. A notable stand made by the Bradford woolcombers and weavers in 1825 resulted in complete defeat and the permanent break-up of the Union. At Kidderminster, three years later, practically the whole trade of the town was brought to a standstill by the carpet-weavers' six months' resistance to a reduction of 17 per cent. in their wages[3]—a resistance in which the operatives received the sympathy and support of many who did not belong to their class. The emancipated combinations were no more able to resist reductions than the secret ones had

[1] The *Trades Newspaper* was managed by a committee of eleven delegates from different trades, of which John Gast was chairman, and was edited, at first by Mr. Baines, son of the proprietor of the *Leeds Mercury*, and afterwards by a Mr. Anderson. *The Laws and Regulations of the Trades Newspaper* (London, 1825, 12 pp.) are preserved in the Place MSS. 27803—414. The issues from July 17, 1825, to its amalgamation with *The Trades Free Press* in 1828, are in the British Museum.

[2] £232,000 was raised by one committee alone between 1826 and 1829. See *Report of the Committee appointed at a Public Meeting at the City of London Tavern, 2 May, 1826, to relieve the Manufacturers*, by W. H. Hyett (London, 1829).

[3] *A Letter to the Carpet Manufacturers of Kidderminster*, by the Rev. H. Price (London, 1828, 16 pp.); *A Letter to the Rev. H. Price, upon the Tendency of Certain Publications of his*, by Oppidanus (London, 1828); and *A Verbatim Report of the Trial of the Rev. Humphrey Price upon a Criminal Information by the Kidderminster Carpet Manufacturers for Alleged Inflammatory Publications during the Turn-out of the Weavers* (London, 1829).

been, and in some instances the workmen again resorted to violence and machine-breaking.[1]

For a moment the repeal seemed, after all, to have done nothing but prove the futility of mere sectional combination, and the working men turned back again from Trade Union action to the larger aims and wider character of the Radical and Socialistic agitations of the time, with which, from 1829 to 1848, the Trade Union Movement became inextricably entangled. This is the phase which furnishes the theme of the following chapter.

[1] In April, 1826, the Blackburn weavers began a serious outbreak, which spread to Manchester, and was only put down by the troops after the destruction of over a thousand power looms. (*Annual Register*, 1826, pp. 63, 70, 111, 128; Walpole's *History of England*, vol. ii. pp. 141–2.)

CHAPTER III.

THE REVOLUTIONARY PERIOD.

[1829–1842.]

So far we have been mainly concerned with societies formed in particular trades, and known as institutions, associations, trade clubs, trade societies, unions, and union societies. We have, by anticipation, applied the term Trade Union to them in its modern sense; but in no case that we have discovered did they call themselves so. It is in the leading articles of the newspapers of 1830–4 that we first come upon references to some great Power of Darkness vaguely described as "the Trades Union." We find, moreover, that there was in that day, as there has been repeatedly since, an Old Unionism and a New Unionism, and that "the Trades Union" represented the New Unionism, and the trade club, or Trade Union, as we have called it, the Old. The distinction between a Trade Union and a Trades Union is exactly that which the names imply. A Trade Union is a combination of the members of one trade; a Trades Union is a combination of different trades. "*The* Trades Union," the bugbear of the *Times* in 1834, means the ideal at which the Trades Unionists aimed: that is, a complete union of all the workers in the country in a single national Trades Union. The peculiar significance of Trades Union as distinguished from Trade Union must be carefully borne in mind throughout this chapter, as it has passed out of use and occurs now only as a literary blunder. Our pre-

sent unions of workers in different though related trades are usually called Amalgamations ; and our combinations of different unions are called Federations. But both Amalgamations and Federations, being definitely limited to similar or related and interdependent trades, are in idea essentially Trade Unions. The distinctive connotation of the term Trades Union was the ideal of complete solidarity of all wage-workers in a single "universal" organisation. It is the attempt, on the part of the Trade Union leaders, to form, not only national societies of particular trades, but also to include all manual workers in one comprehensive organisation, that constitutes the New Unionism of 1829–34.[1]

The Lancashire and Yorkshire textile and building operatives were the pioneers of the new movement. The year 1829, closing the long depression of trade which began in the autumn of 1825, after the repeal of the Combination Laws, witnessed the establishment of important national Unions in both industries, but that of the Cotton-spinners claims precedence in respect of its more rapid development.

The Cotton-spinners' trade clubs of Lancashire date from 1792. In the early years of the present century attempts had been made by the Glasgow spinners to unite

[1] In a manuscript essay on the different forms of association, entitled "Trades Unions condemned, Trade Clubs justified," Place gives us the distinction between the two. "A trade society," he says, "that is, a club consisting of the journeymen in any one trade which does not form part of a union of several trades, which does not appoint delegates to meet other delegates, is a very different thing from a Trades Union, even though it may call itself a union. Trades Unions are those in which several trades, or portions of several trades, in the same line of business or in different callings, are confederated by means of delegates." Place often refers to this distinction between the Trade Clubs, which were, according to his view, "very valuable institutions," and the "Trades Unions," or "associations of several or many trades in one combination," which he regarded as "very mischievous associations." William Lovett, too, watching the same transformation, makes, in a letter published in the *Poor Man's Guardian* of August 30, 1834, exactly the same distinction.

the Lancashire and Scotch organisations in a national association ; but these attempts had not resulted in more than temporary alliances in particular emergencies. The rapid improvement of spinning machinery, and the enterprise of the Lancashire millowners, were, at the date of the repeal of the Combination Laws, shifting the centre of the trade from Glasgow to Manchester ; and it was the Lancashire Cotton-spinners who now took the lead in trade matters. The failure of a disastrous six months' strike in 1829 at Hyde, near Manchester, led to the conviction that no local Union could succeed against a combination of employers ; and the spinners' societies of England, Scotland, and Ireland were therefore invited to send delegates to a conference to be held at Ramsay, in the Isle of Man, in the month of December, 1829.

This delegate meeting, of which there is an excellent report,[1] lasted for nearly a week. The proceedings were of a remarkably temperate character, the discussions turning chiefly on the relative advantages of one supreme executive, to be established at Manchester, and three co-equal national executives for England, Scotland, and Ireland. John Doherty,[2] secretary and leader of the

[1] *A Report of the Proceedings of the Meeting of Cotton-spinners at Ramsay*, &c. (Manchester, 1829, 56 pages).

[2] John Doherty, described by Place as a somewhat hot-headed Roman Catholic, was born in Ireland in 1799, and went to work in a cotton-mill at Larne, Co. Antrim, at the age of ten. In 1816 he migrated to Manchester, where he quickly became one of the leading Trade Unionists, and secretary to the local Cotton-spinners' Society. We find him, for instance, taking a prominent part in the agitation against the proposed re-enactment of the Combination Laws in 1825. In 1829 he organised the great strike of the Hyde spinners against a reduction of rates, and became, as described in the text, successively General Secretary to the Federation of Spinners' Societies, and to the National Association for the Protection of Labour. The articles in the *Voice of the People* and the *Poor Man's Advocate*, which are evidently from his pen, show him to have been a man of wide information, great natural shrewdness, and far-reaching aims. In 1832, during the Reform crisis, Place describes him as advising the working classes to use the occasion for a social revolution. He subsequently acted as secretary to an association of operatives and masters estab-

Manchester Cotton-spinners, advocated a central executive; while Thomas Foster (a man of independent means who attended the conference at his own expense) favoured a scheme of home rule. Eventually a "Grand General Union of the United Kingdom" was established, subject to an annual delegate meeting and three national committees. The union was to include all male spinners and piecers, the women and girls being urged to form separate organisations. Its income consisted of a contribution of a penny per week per member, to be levied in addition to the contribution to the local society. Doherty was general secretary, and Foster and a certain Patrick McGowan were appointed to organise the spinners throughout the United Kingdom.

Whether this Cotton-spinners' Federation, as we should call it, became really representative of the three kingdoms does not appear. A second general delegate meeting was held at Manchester in December, 1830, which intervened in the great spinners' strike then in progress at Ashton-under-Lyne. At this conference the constitution of 1829 was re-enacted with some alterations. The three national executives were apparently replaced by an executive council of three members elected by the Manchester Society, to be reinforced at its monthly meetings by two delegates chosen in turn by each of the neighbouring districts. Foster was appointed general secretary; and a committee was ordered to draw up a general list of prices, for which purpose one member in each mill was directed to send up a copy of the list by which he was paid. Although another delegate meeting of this "Grand General Union" was fixed for Whit Monday, 1831, at Liverpool, no further record of its existence can be traced. It is probable that the attempt to include Scotland and

lished to enforce the Factory Acts, and was one of Lord Shaftesbury's most strenuous supporters. In 1838, when he had become a printer and bookseller in Manchester, he gave evidence before the Select Committee on Combinations of Workmen, in which he described the spinners' organisations and strikes.

Ireland proved a failure, and that the union had dwindled into a federation of Lancashire societies, mainly preoccupied in securing a legislative restriction of the hours of labour.[1]

But the National Union of Cotton-spinners prepared the way for the more ambitious project of the Trades Union. Doherty, who seems to have resigned his official connection with the Cotton-spinners' Union, conceived the idea of a National Association, not of one trade alone, but of all classes of wage-earners. Already in May, 1829, we find him, as Secretary of the Manchester Cotton-spinners, writing to acknowledge a gift of ten pounds from the Liverpool Sailmakers, and expressing "a hope that our joint efforts may eventually lead to a Grand General Union of all trades throughout the United Kingdom."[2] At his instigation a meeting of delegates from twenty organised trades was held at Manchester in February, 1830, which ended in the establishment, five months later, of the National Association for the Protection of Labour.[3] The express object of this society was

[1] Foster died in 1831, and McGowan settled at Glasgow. "Almost every spinning district," writes the *Poor Man's Advocate* of June 23, 1832, "of any consequence, was enrolled in the Union. The power of the Union, of course, increased with its members, and a number of the worst-paying employers were compelled to advance the wages of the spinners to something like the standard rate. . . . The Union, however, which Mr. McGowan had mainly contributed to mature, has since, from distrust or weariness, sunk into comparative insignificance."

[2] The letter is preserved in the MS. "Contribution Book" of the Liverpool Sailmakers' Friendly Association, established 1817.

[3] The first record that we have found relating to a universal Trades Union is the *Articles of the Philanthropic Hercules, for the mutual support of the labouring mechanics.* This was a proposal by John Gast, the energetic London shipwright who became a friend and ally of Francis Place. The preliminary address, suggesting a contribution of a penny per week, a general committee of delegates from each trade, and virtual centralisation of funds, appears in the *Gorgon* for the 5th of December, 1818. In the issue for the 29th of January, 1819, it is described as established. The *Articles*, signed by John Gast as President, and dated December 24, 1818, are preserved in the

to resist reductions, but not to strike for advances. Its constitution appears to have been largely borrowed from that of the contemporary Cotton-spinners, which it resembled in being a combination, not of directly enlisted individuals, but of existing separate societies, each of which paid an entrance fee of a pound, together with a shilling for each of its members, and contributed at the rate of a penny per week per head of its membership. Doherty was the first secretary, and the Association appears very soon to have enrolled about 150 separate Unions, mostly in Lancashire, Cheshire, Derby, Nottingham, and Leicester. The trades which joined were mainly connected with the various textile industries, the cotton-spinners, hosiery-workers, calico-printers, and silk-weavers taking a leading part. The Association also included numerous societies of mechanics, moulders, blacksmiths, and many miscellaneous trades. The building trades were scarcely represented—a fact to be accounted for by the contemporary existence of the Builders' Union hereafter described. The list[1] of the receipts of the Association for the first nine months of its existence includes payments amounting to £1,866, a sum which indicates a membership of between 10,000 and 20,000, spread over the five counties already mentioned. A vigorous propaganda was carried on throughout the northern and midland counties by its officials, who succeeded in establishing a weekly paper, the *United Trades Co-operative Journal*, which was presently brought to an end by the inter-

Place MSS 27899—143. We have found no further mention of this organisation, which was probably stillborn. Another attempt eight years later met with no better success. "In 1826," as we incidentally learn from the *Herald of the Rights of Industry* (Manchester, April 5, 1834), "a Trades Union was formed in Manchester, which extended slightly to some of the surrounding districts, and embraced several shades in each; but it expired before it was so much as known to a large majority of the operatives in the neighbourhood."

[1] Given as Appendix to the pamphlet *On Combination of Trades* (London, 1830). Compare Wade's *History of the Middle and Working Classes* (London, 1834), p. 277.

vention of the Commissioners of Stamps, who insisted on each number bearing a fourpenny stamp.[1] Undeterred by this failure, the committee undertook the more serious task of starting a sevenpenny stamped weekly, and requested Francis Place to become the treasurer of an accumulated fund. "The subscription," writes Place to John Cam Hobhouse, December 5, 1830, "extends from Birmingham to the Clyde; the committee sits at Manchester; and the money collected amounts to about £3,000, and will, they tell me, shortly be as much as £5,000, with which sum, when raised, they propose to commence a weekly newspaper to be called the *Voice of the People.*" Accordingly in January, 1831, appeared the first number of what proved to be an excellent weekly journal, the object of which was declared to be "to unite the productive classes of the community in one common bond of union." Besides full weekly reports of the committee meetings of the National Association at Manchester and Nottingham, this newspaper, ably edited by John Doherty, gave great attention to Radical politics, including the Repeal of the Union with Ireland, and the progress of revolution on the Continent.[2]

From the reports published in the *Voice of the People* we gather that the first important action of the Association was in connection with the great strike of cotton-spinners at Ashton-under-Lyne in the winter of 1830–31. Considerable sums were raised by way of levy for the support of the strike, the Nottingham trades subscribing liberally. But the Association soon experienced a check. In February, 1831, a new secretary decamped with £100. This led a delegate meeting at Nottingham, in April, 1831, to decree that each Union should retain in hand the money contributed by its own members. But the usual failings

[1] Thirty-one numbers, extending from March 6 to October 2, 1830, are in the Manchester Public Library (620 B).

[2] The numbers from January to September, 1831, are in the British Museum. See Place's letter in *Westminster Review*, 1831, p. 243.

of unions of various trades quickly showed themselves. The refusal of the Lancashire branches to support the great Nottingham strike which immediately ensued, led to the defection of the Nottingham members. Nevertheless, the Association was spreading over new ground. At the end of April a delegate meeting at Bolton, representing nine thousand coalminers of Staffordshire, Yorkshire, Cheshire, and Wales, resolved to join. The Belfast trades applied for affiliation. In Leeds nine thousand members were enrolled, chiefly among the woollen-workers. Missionaries were sent to organise the Staffordshire potters; and a National Potters' Union, extending throughout the country, was established and affiliated. All this activity lends a certain credibility to the assertion, made in various quarters, that the Association numbered one hundred thousand members, and that the *Voice of the People*, published at 7d. weekly, enjoyed the then enormous circulation of thirty thousand.

Here at last we have substance given to the formidable idea of "the Trades Union." It was soon worked up by the newspapers to a pitch at which it alarmed the employers, dismally excited the imaginations of the middle class, and compelled the attention of the Government. But there was no cause for apprehension. Lack of funds made the Association little more than a name. Practically no trade action is reported in such numbers of its organ as are still extant. The business of the Manchester Committee seems to have been confined to the promotion of the "Short Time Bill." On April 23, 1831, at the general meeting of the Association, then designated the Lancashire Trades Unions, it was resolved to prepare petitions in favour of extending this measure to all trades and all classes of workers. Active support was given in the meantime to Mr. Sadler's Factory Bill. Towards the end of the year we suddenly lose all trace of the National Association for the Protection of Labour, as far as Manchester is concerned. "After it had extended about a hundred miles round this town," writes a working-class

newspaper of 1832, "a fatality came upon it that almost threatened its extinction. . . . But though it declined in Manchester it spread and flourished in other places; and we rejoice to say that the resolute example set by Yorkshire and other places is likely once more to revive the drooping energies of those trades who had the honour of originating and establishing the Association." [1]

What the fatality was that extinguished the Association in Manchester is not stated; but Doherty, to whose organising ability its initial success had been due, evidently quarrelled with the executive committee, and the *Voice of the People* ceased to appear. In its place we find Doherty issuing, from January, 1832, the *Poor Man's Advocate*, and vainly striving, in face of the "spirit" of "jealousy and faction," to build up the Yorkshire branches of the Association into a national organisation, with its headquarters in London. After the middle of 1832 we hear no more, either of the Association itself or of Doherty's more ambitious projects concerning it.[2]

The place of the National Association was soon filled by other contemporary general trade societies, of which the first and most important was the Builders' Union, or the General Trades Union, as it was sometimes termed.

[1] *Union Pilot and Co-operative Intelligencer*, March 24, 1832 (Manchester Public Library, 640 E).

[2] Meanwhile the coalminers of Northumberland and Durham, under the leadership of "Tommy Hepburn," an organiser of remarkable ability, had formed their first strong Union in 1830, which for two years kept the two counties in a state of excitement. Strikes and riotings in 1831 and 1832 caused the troops to be called out: marines were sent from Portsmouth, and squadrons of cavalry scoured the country. After six months' struggle in 1832 the Union collapsed, and the men submitted. See Sykes' *Local Records of Northumberland*, &c., vol. ii. pp. 293, 353; Fynes' *Miners of Northumberland and Durham* (Blyth, 1873), chaps. iv., v., vi.; *An Earnest Address and Urgent Appeal to the People of England in behalf of the oppressed and suffering pitmen of the Counties of Northumberland and Durham*, by W. Scott (Newcastle, 1831); *History and Description of Fossil Fuel, &c.*, by John Holland (London, 1835), pp. 298–304.

It consisted of the separate organisations of the seven building trades, viz., joiners, masons, bricklayers, plasterers, plumbers, painters, and builders' labourers, and is, so far as we know, the solitary example in the history of these trades of a federal union embracing all classes of building operatives, and purporting to extend over the whole country.[1]

The Grand Rules of the Builders' Union set forth an elaborate constitution in which it was attempted to combine a local and trade autonomy of separate lodges with a centralised authority for defensive and aggressive purposes. The rules inform us that "the object of this society shall be to advance and equalise the price of labour in every branch of the trade we admit into this society." Each lodge shall be "governed by its own password and sign, masons to themselves, and joiners to themselves, and so

[1] It is not clear whether this scheme was initiated by carpenters or masons. The carpenters and joiners are distinguished among the building trades for the antiquity of their local trade clubs, which are known to have existed in London as far back as 1799. A national organisation was established in London in July, 1827, called the Friendly Society of Operative Carpenters and Joiners, which still survives under the title of the "General Union." MS. records in the office of the latter show that this federation had 938 members in 1832, rising to 3,691 in 1833, and to 6,774 in 1834, a total not paralleled until 1865. This rapid increase marks the general upheaval of these years. But this Society did not throw in its lot with the Builders' Union until 1833. On the other hand, the existing Operative Stonemasons' Friendly Society, which dates its separate existence from 1834, but which certainly existed in some form from 1832, has among its archives what appear to be the original MS. rules and initiation rites of its predecessor, the Builders' Union; and in these documents the masons figure as the foremost members. Moreover, these rules and rites closely resemble those of contemporary unions among the Yorkshire woollen-workers; and an independent tradition fixes the parent lodge of the Masons' Society at the great woollen centre of Huddersfield, whereas the Friendly Society of Carpenters and Joiners, founded in London, had its headquarters at Leicester. But however this may be, the constitution and ceremonies described in these documents owe their significance to the fact that they are nearly identical with those adopted by many of the national Unions of the period, and were largely adopted by the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union of 1834.

on ;" and it is ordered that "no lodge be opened by any other lodge that is not the same trade of that lodge that opens them, that masons open masons, and joiners open joiners, and so on ;" moreover, "no other member [is] to visit a lodge that is not the same trade unless he is particularly requested." Each trade had its own bye-laws ; but these were subject to the general rules adopted at an annual delegate meeting. This annual conference of the "Grand Lodge Delegates," better known as the "Builders' Parliament," consisted of one representative of each lodge, and was the supreme legislative authority, altering rules, deciding on general questions of policy, and electing the president and other officials. The local lodges, though directly represented at the annual meetings, had had apparently little connection in the interim with the seat of government. The society was divided into geographical districts, the lodges in each district sending delegates to quarterly district meetings, which elected a grand master, deputy grand master, and corresponding secretary for the district, and decided which should be the "divisional lodge," or district executive centre. These divisional lodges or provincial centres were, according to the rules, to serve in turn as the grand lodge or executive centre for the whole society. Whether the members of the general committee were chosen by the general lodge or by the whole society is not clear ; but they formed with the president and general corresponding secretary the national executive. The expenses of this executive and of the annual delegate meeting were levied on the whole society, each lodge sending monthly returns of its members and a summary of its finances to the general secretary. The main business of the national executive was to determine the trade policy of the Associations, and to grant or withhold permission to strike. As no mention is made of friendly benefits, we may conclude that the Builders' Union, like most of the national or general Unions of this militant time, confined itself exclusively to defending its members against their employers.

The operative builders did not rest content with an elaborate constitution and code. There was also a ritual. The Stonemasons' Society has preserved among its records a MS. copy of a "Making Parts Book," ordered to be used by all lodges of the Builders' Union on the admission of members. Under the Combination Laws oaths of secrecy and obedience were customary in the more secret and turbulent Trade Unions, notably that of the Glasgow Cotton-spinners and the Northumberland Miners. The custom survived the repeal; and admission to the Builders' Union involved a lengthy ceremony conducted by the officers of the lodge—the "outside and inside tylers," the "warden," the "president," "secretary," and "principal conductor"—and taken part in by the candidates and the members of the lodge. Besides the opening prayer, and religious hymns sung at intervals, these "initiation parts" consisted of questions and responses by the *dramatis personæ* in quaint doggerel, and were brought to a close by the new members taking a solemn oath of loyalty and secrecy. Officers clothed in surplices, inner chambers into which the candidates were admitted blindfolded, a skeleton, drawn sword, battle-axes, and other mystic "properties" enhanced the sensational solemnity of this fantastic performance.[1] Ceremonies of

[1] A similar ritual is printed in *Character, Objects, and Effects of Trades Unions* (London, 1834), as used by the Woolcombers' Union. Probably the Builders' Union copied their ritual from some union of woollen-workers. The Stonemasons' MS. contains, like the copy printed in this pamphlet, a solemn reference to "King Edward the Third," who was regarded as the great benefactor of the English wool trade, but whose connection with the building trade is not obvious. In a later printed edition of *The Initiating Parts of the Friendly Society of Operative Masons*, dated Birmingham, 1834, his name is omitted, and that of Solomon substituted, apparently in memory of the Freemasons' assumed origin at the building of the Temple at Jerusalem.

The actual origin of this initiation ceremony is not certainly known. John Tester, who had been a leader of the Bradford Woolcombers in 1825, afterwards turned against the Unions, and published, in the *Leeds Mercury* of June and July, 1834, a series of letters

this kind were adopted by all the national and general Unions of the time: thus we find items for "washing surplices" appearing in the accounts of various lodges of contemporary societies. Although in the majority of cases the ritual was no doubt as harmless as that of the Freemasons or the Oddfellows, yet the excitement and sensation of the proceedings may have predisposed light-headed fanatical members, in times of industrial conflict, to violent acts in the interest of the Association. At all events, the references to its mock terrors in the capitalist press seem to have effectually scared the governing classes.

The first years of the Builders' Union, apparently, were devoted to organisation. During 1832 it rapidly spread through the Lancashire and Midland towns; and at the beginning of the following year a combined attack was made upon the Liverpool employers. The ostensible grievance of the men was the interference of the "contractor," who, supplanting the master mason, master carpenter, &c., undertook the management of all building operations. A placard issued by the Liverpool Painters

denouncing the Leeds Clothiers' Union. In these he states that "the mode of initiation was the same as practised for years before by the flannel-weavers of Rochdale, with a party of whom the thing, in the shape it then wore, had at first originated. . . . A great part of the ceremony, . . . particularly the death scene, was taken from the ceremonial of one division of the Oddfellows, . . . who were flannel-weavers at Rochdale, in Lancashire; and all that could be well turned from the rules and lectures of one society into the regulations of the others was so turned, with some trifling verbal alterations." In another letter he says that the writer of the "lecture book" was one Mark Warde. Tester is not implicitly to be believed, but it seems probable that the regalia, doggerel rhymes, and mystic rites of the unions of this time were copied from those of an Oddfellows' Lodge, with some recollections of Freemasonry. In his *Mutual Thrift* (London, 1891) the Rev. J. Frome Wilkinson describes (p. 14) the initiation ceremony of the "Patriotic Oddfellows," a society which merged in the present "Grand United Order of Oddfellows" before the close of the century. The ceremony so described corresponds in many characteristic details with that of the Trades Unions. All the older friendly society "Orders" imposed an oath, and were consequently illegal.

announces that they have joined "the General Union of the Artisans employed in the process of building" in order to put down "that baneful, unjust, and ruinous system of monopolising the hard-earned profits of another man's business, called 'contracting.'" Naturally, the little masters were not friendly to the contracting system; and most of them agreed with the men's demand that its introduction should be resisted. Encouraged by this support, the several branches of the building trade in Liverpool simultaneously sent in identical claims for a uniform rate of wages for each class of operatives, a limitation of apprentices, the prohibition of machinery and piecework, and other requirements special to each branch of the trade. These demands were communicated to the employers in letters couched in dictatorial and even insulting terms, and were coupled with a claim to be paid wages for any time they might lose by striking to enforce their orders. "We consider," said one of these letters, "that as you have not treated our rules with that deference you ought to have done, we consider you highly culpable and deserving of being severely chastised." And "further," says another, "that each and every one in such strike shall be paid by you the sum of four shillings per day for every day you refuse to comply."

This sort of language brought the employers of all classes into line. At a meeting held in June, 1833, they decided not only to refuse all the men's demands, but to make a deliberate attempt to extinguish the Union. For this purpose they publicly declared that henceforth no man need apply for work unless he was prepared to sign a formal renunciation of the Trades Union and all its works. The insistence on this formal renunciation, henceforth to be famous in Trade Union records as the "presentation of the document," exasperated the Builders' Union. The Liverpool demands were repeated in Manchester, where the employers adopted the same tactics as at Liverpool.[1]

[1] *An Impartial Statement of the Proceedings of the Members of the Trades Union Societies, and of the Steps taken in consequence by the*

In the very heat of the battle (September, 1833) the Builders' Union held its annual delegate meeting at Manchester. It lasted six days; cost, it is said, over £3,000; and was attended by two hundred and seventy delegates, representing thirty thousand operatives. This session of the "Builders' Parliament" attracted universal attention. Robert Owen addressed the Conference at great length, confiding to it his "great secret" "that labour is the source of all wealth," and that wealth can be retained in the hands of the producers by a universal compact among the productive classes. It was decided, perhaps under his influence, to build central offices at Birmingham, which should also serve as an educational establishment. The design for this "Builders' Gild Hall," as it was termed, was made by an architect who was a disciple of Owen. It included, on paper, a lecture hall and various school-rooms for the children of members. The foundation-stone was laid with great ceremony on December 5, 1833, when the Birmingham trades marched in procession to the site, and enthusiastic speeches were made.[1]

We learn from the *Pioneer, or Trades Union Magazine* (an unstamped penny weekly newspaper published at first at Birmingham, at that time the organ of the Builders' Union), the ardent faith and the vast pretensions of these New Unionists. "A union founded on right and just principles," wrote the editor in the first number, "is all that is now required to put poverty and the fear of it for ever out of society." "The vaunted power of capital will now be put to the test: we shall soon discover its worthlessness when deprived of your labour. Labour prolific of wealth will readily command the purchase of the soil; and at a very early period we

Master Traders of Liverpool (Liverpool, 1833); *Remarks on the Nature and Probable Termination of the Struggle now existing between the Master and Journeyman Builders* (Manchester, 1833); *Times*, June 27, 1833.

[1] *Pioneer*, December 7, 1833; *History of Birmingham*, by W. Hutton (Birmingham, 1835), p. 87.

shall find the idle possessor compelled to ask of you to release him from his worthless holding." Elaborate plans were propounded for the undertaking of all the building of the country by a Grand National Gild of Builders: each lodge to elect a foreman; and the foremen to elect a general superintendent. The disappointment of these high hopes was rude and rapid. The Lancashire societies demurred to the centralisation which had been voted by the delegate meeting in September at the instigation of the Midland societies. Two great strikes at Liverpool and Manchester ended towards the close of the year in total failure. The Builders' Gild Hall was abandoned;[1] and the *Pioneer* moved to London, where it became the organ of another body, the Grand Consolidated Trades Union, with which the various south country and metropolitan branches of the building trade had already preferred to affiliate themselves. Nevertheless the Builders' Union retained its hold upon the northern counties during the early months of 1834, and held another "parliament" at Birmingham in April, at which Scotch and Irish representatives were present.

The aggressive activity and rapid growth of the Builders' Union during 1832–33 had been only a part of a general upheaval in labour organisation. The Cotton-spinners had recovered from the failure of the Ashton strike (1830–31) by the autumn of 1833, when we find Doherty prosecuting with his usual vigour the agitation for an eight hours day which had been set on foot by his Society for National Regeneration. "The plan is," writes J. Fielden to William Cobbett, "that about the 1st March next, the day the said Bill (now Act) limits the time of work for children under eleven years of age to eight hours a day, those above that age, both grown persons and adults, should insist on eight hours a day being the maximum of time for them to labour; and their present weekly wages for sixty-nine hours a week to be the

[1] It was eventually finished by the landlord, and still exists as a metal warehouse in Shadwell Street.

minimum weekly wages for forty-eight hours a week after that time" ; and he proceeds to explain that the Cotton-spinners had adopted this idea of securing shorter hours by a strike rather than by legislation on Lord Althorpe's suggestion that they should "make a short-time bill for themselves."[1] The Lancashire textile trades followed the lead of the Cotton-spinners, and prepared for a "universal" strike. Meanwhile their Yorkshire brethren were already engaged in an embittered struggle with their employers. The Leeds Clothiers' Union, established about 1831, and apparently one of the constituent societies of the National Association for the Protection of Labour, bore a striking resemblance to the Builders' Union, not only in ceremonial and constitution, but also in its policy and history.[2] In the spring of 1833 it made a series of attacks on particular establishments with the double aim of forcing all the workers to join the Union and of obtaining a uniform scale of prices. These demands were met with the usual weapon. The employers entered into what was called "the Manufacturers' Bond," by which they bound themselves under penalty to refuse employment to all members of the Union. The men indignantly refused to abandon the society ; and a lock-out ensued which lasted some months, and was the occasion of repeated leading articles in the *Times*.[3]

The Potters' Union (also established by Doherty, in 1830) numbered, in the autumn of 1833, eight thousand members, of whom six thousand belonged to Staffordshire and the remainder to the lodges at Newcastle-on-Tyne,

[1] Letters to Cobbett's *Weekly Register*, reprinted in the *Pioneer*, December 21, 1833.

[2] For an unfavourable account of this Union, see the evidently *ex parte* statement given in the pamphlet *Character, Objects, and Effects of Trades Unions* (London, 1834). The employers seem to have regarded all the demands of the men as equally unreasonable, even the request for a list of piecework prices. See *Times*, October 2, 1833.

[3] *Times*, October 28, 1833.

Derby, Bristol, and Swinton [1]—another instance of the extraordinary growth of Trade Unions during these years.

How far these and other societies were joined together in any federal body is not clear. The panic-stricken references in the capitalist press to "the Trades Union," and the vague mention in working-class newspapers of the affiliation of particular societies to larger organisations lead us to believe that during the year 1833 there was more than one attempt to form a "General Union of All Trades." The Owenite newspapers, towards the end of 1833, are full of references to the formation of a "General Union of the Productive Classes." What manner of association Owen himself contemplated may be learnt from his speech to the Congress of Owenite Societies in London on the 6th of October. "I will now give you," said he, "a short outline of the great changes which are in contemplation, and which shall come suddenly upon society like a thief in the night. . . . It is intended that national arrangements shall be formed to include all the working classes in the great organisation, and that each department shall become acquainted with what is going on in other departments; that all individual competition is to cease; that all manufactures are to be carried on by National companies. . . . All trades shall first form Associations of lodges to consist of a convenient number for carrying on the business: . . . all individuals of the specific craft shall become members." [2] Immediately after this we

[1] *Crisis*, October 19, 1833.

[2] Ibid., October 12, 1833. The history of the General Trades Unions from 1832 to 1833 is mainly to be gathered from the files of the Owenite press, the *Crisis*, the *Pioneer*, and the *Herald of the Rights of Industry*. The *Poor Man's Guardian* and the *Man* also contain occasional references. The *Official Gazette*, issued by the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union itself in June, 1834, has unfortunately not been preserved. We have also been unable to discover any copy of the Glasgow-Owenite journals, the *Tradesman*, *Trades Advocate*, *Liberator*, &c., mostly edited or written by Owen's disciple, Alexander Campbell, the secretary of the local joiners' Trade Union.

find in existence a "Grand National Consolidated Trades Union," in the establishment and extraordinary growth of which the project of "the Trades Union" may be said to have culminated. This organisation seems to have actually started in January, 1834. Owen was its chief recruiter and propagandist. During the next few months his activity was incessant; and lodges were affiliated all over the country. Innumerable local trade clubs were absorbed. Early in February, 1834, a special delegate meeting was held at Owen's London Institute in Charlotte Street, Fitzroy Square, at which it was resolved that the new body should take the form of a federation of separate trade lodges, each lodge to be composed usually of members of one trade, but with provision for "miscellaneous lodges" in places where the numbers were small, and even for "female miscellaneous lodges." Each lodge retained its own funds, levies being made throughout the whole order for strike purposes. The Conference urged each lodge to provide sick, funeral, and superannuation benefits for its own members; and proposals were adopted to lease land on which to employ "turnouts," and to set up co-operative workshops. The initiation rites and solemn oath, common to all the Unions of the period, were apparently adopted.

Nothing in the annals of Unionism in this country at all approached the rapidity of the growth which ensued.[1] Within a few weeks the Union appears to have been joined by at least half a million members, including tens of thousands of farm labourers and women. This must have been in great measure due to the fact that, as no discoverable regular contribution was exacted for central expenses, the affiliation or absorption of existing

[1] It is interesting to notice how closely this organisation resembles, in its Trade Union features, the well-known "Knights of Labour" of the United States, established in 1869, and still one of the most powerful labour organisations in the world. ("Historical Sketch of the Knights of Labour," by Carroll D. Wright, *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, January, 1887.)

organisations was very easy. Still, the extension of new lodges in previously unorganised trades and districts was enormous. Numerous missionary delegates, duly equipped with all the paraphernalia required for the mystic initiation rites, perambulated the country; and a positive mania for Trade Unionism set in. In December, 1833, we are told that "scarcely a branch of trade exists in the West of Scotland that is not now in a state of Union."[1] The *Times* reports that two delegates who went to Hull enrolled in one evening a thousand men of various trades.[2] At Exeter the two delegates were seized by the police, and found to be furnished with "two wooden axes, two large cutlasses, two masks, and two white garments or robes, a large figure of Death with the dart and hourglass, a Bible and Testament."[3] Shop-assistants on the one hand, and journeymen chimneysweeps on the other, were swept into the vortex. The cabinetmakers of Belfast insisted on joining "the Trades Union, or Friendly Society, which had for its object the unity of all cabinetmakers in the three kingdoms."[4] We hear of "Ploughmen's Unions" as far off as Perthshire,[5] and of a "Shearman's Union" at Dundee. And the then rural character of the Metropolitan suburbs is quaintly brought home to us by the announcement of a union of the "agricultural and other labourers" of Kensington, Walham Green, Fulham, and Hammersmith. Nor were the women neglected. The "Grand Lodge of Operative Bonnet Makers" vies in activity with the miscellaneous "Grand Lodge of the Women of Great Britain and Ireland"; and the "Lodge of Female Tailors" asks indignantly whether the "Tailors' Order" is really going to prohibit women from making waistcoats. Whether the Grand National Consolidated

[1] *Glasgow Argus*, quoted in *People's Conservative*, December 28, 1833.
[2] May 5, 1834.
[3] *Times*, January 23 and 30, 1834.
[4] *Kerr's Exposition of Legislative Tyranny and Defence of the Trades Union* (Belfast, 1834), vol. 1611 of the Haliday Tracts in the Royal Irish Academy, Dublin.
[5] *Poor Man's Guardian*, July 26, 1834.

Trades Union was responsible for the lodges of "Female Gardeners" and "Ancient Virgins," who afterwards distinguished themselves in the riotous demand for an eight hours day at Oldham,[1] is not clear.

How the business of this colossal federation was actually managed, we do not know.[2] Some kind of executive committee sat in London, with four paid officers. The need for statesmanlike administration was certainly great. The avowed policy of the federation was to inaugurate a general strike of all wage-earners throughout the country. But from the very beginning of its career it found itself incessantly involved in sectional disputes. The mere joining of "the Trades Union" was often made the occasion of the dismissal, by the employers, of all those who would not sign the "document" abjuring all combinations. Thus the accession of the Leicester Hosiers in November, 1833, led to a disastrous dispute, in which over 1,300 men had to be supported. In Glasgow a serious strike broke out among the building trades at a time when the Calico-printers, Engineers, and Cabinetmakers were already struggling with their employers. The most costly conflict, however, which the Grand National found on its hands during the winter was that which raged at Derby, where fifteen hundred men, women, and children had been locked out by their employers for refusing to abandon the Union. The "Derby turn-outs" were at first supported, like their fellow-victims elsewhere, by contributions sent from the trade organisations in various parts of the kingdom; but it soon became evident that without systematic aid they would be compelled to give way. A levy of a shilling per member was accordingly decreed by the Grand National Executive in February, 1834. Arrangements were made for obtaining premises and machinery upon which to set a few of the strikers to work on their own account. The struggle ended, after four months, in

[1] *Times*, April 19, 1834.

[2] None of the records of this organisation have been preserved.

the complete triumph of the employers, and the return of the operatives to work.

The "Derby turn-out" was widely advertised by the newspapers, and brought much odium on the Grand National. But the denunciation of "the Trades Union" greatly increased when part of London was laid in darkness by a strike of the gas-stokers. The men employed by the different gas companies in the metropolis had been quietly organising during the winter, with the intention of simultaneously withdrawing from work if their demands were not acceded to. The plot was discovered, and the companies succeeded in replacing their Union workmen by others. But weeks elapsed before the new hands were able completely to perform their work,[1] and early in March, 1834, Westminster was for some days in partial darkness. Amid the storm of obloquy caused by these disputes, the Grand National suddenly found itself in conflict with the law. The conviction of six Dorchester labourers, in March, 1834, for the mere act of administering an oath, and their sentence to seven years' transportation, came like a thunderbolt on the Trade Union world.

To understand such a barbarous sentence we must picture to ourselves the effect on the minds of the Government and the propertied classes of the menacing ideal of "the Trades Union," brought home by the aggressive policy of the Unions during the last four years. Already in 1830 the formation of national and General Unions had excited the attention of the Government. "When we first came into office in November last," writes Lord Melbourne, the Whig Home Secretary, to Sir Herbert Taylor, "the Unions of trades in the North of England and in other parts of the country for the purpose of raising wages, &c., and the General Union for the same purpose, were pointed out to me by Sir Robert Peel [the outgoing Tory Home Secretary] in a conversation I had with him upon the then state of the country,

[1] See the London newspapers for March, 1834; a good summary is given in the *Companion to the Newspaper* for that month (p. 71).

as the most formidable difficulty and danger with which we had to contend; and it struck me as well as the rest of His Majesty's servants in the same light." [1]

To advise the Cabinet in this difficulty, Lord Melbourne called in Nassau Senior, who had just completed his first term of five years as Professor of Political Economy at Oxford, and directed him to prepare, in conjunction with a legal expert, a report on the situation and a plan of remedial legislation. This document throws light both on the state of mind and on the practical judgment of the trusted economist. The two commissioners appear to have made no inquiries among workmen, and to have accepted implicitly every statement, including hearsay gossip, offered by employers. The evidence thus collected naturally led to a very unfavourable conclusion. It produced, as the commissioners recite, "upon our minds the conviction that if the innocent and laborious workman and his family are to be left without protection against the cowardly ferocity by which he is now assailed; if the manufacturer is to employ his capital and the mechanist or chemist his ingenuity, only under the dictation of his short-sighted and rapacious workmen, or his equally ignorant and avaricious rivals; if a few agitators are to be allowed to command a strike which first paralyses the industry of the peculiar class of workpeople over whom they tyrannise, and then extends itself in an increasing circle over the many thousands and tens of thousands to whose labour the assistance of that peculiar class of workpeople is essential;—that if all this is to be unpunished, and to be almost sanctioned by the repeal of the laws by which it was formerly punishable;—it is in vain to hope that we shall long retain the industry, the skill, or the capital on which our manufacturing superiority, and with that superiority our power and almost our existence as a nation, depends."

[1] September 26, 1831: *Lord Melbourne's Papers* (London, 1889), ch. v. p. 130. See also the statements in the House of Lords Debate, *Times*, April 29, 1834.

They accordingly conclude with a series of astounding proposals for the amendment of the law. The Act of 1825 could not conveniently be openly repealed; but its mischievous results were to be counteracted by drastic legislation. They recommend that a law should be passed clearly reciting the common law prohibitions of conspiracy and restraint of trade. The law should go on to forbid, under severe penalties, "all attempts or solicitations, combinations, subscriptions, and solicitations to combinations" to threaten masters, to persuade blacklegs, or even simply to ask workmen to join the Union.[1] Picketing, however peaceful, was to be comprehensively forbidden and ruthlessly punished. Employers or their assistants were to be authorised themselves to arrest men without summons or warrant, and hale them before any justice of the peace. The encouragement of combinations by masters was to be punished by heavy pecuniary penalties, to be recovered by any common informer. "This," say the commissioners, "is as much as we should recommend in the first instance. But if it should be proved that the evil of the combination system cannot be subdued at a less price, . . . *we must recommend the experiment of confiscation*,"—confiscation, that is, of the "funds subscribed for purposes of combination and deposited in Savings Banks or otherwise." [2]

[1] "We recommend that the soliciting of any person to join in combinations, or to subscribe to the like purposes, should be punishable on summary conviction by imprisonment for a shorter period, say not exceeding two months."

[2] The report was never published, and lies in MS. in the Home Office library. Ten years later, when Nassau Senior was acting as Commissioner to report on the condition of the handloom weavers, he revived a good deal of his 1830 Report, but not the astonishing proposals quoted in the text. The portion thus revived appears in his *Historical and Philosophical Essays* (London, 1865), vol. ii.

Since writing the above we have had placed in our hands, through the kindness of Mrs. Simpson, daughter of Nassau Senior, the original answers and letters upon which his report was based. This correspondence shows that the leading Manchester manufacturers were not agreed upon the desirability of re-enacting the Combination

The Whig Government dared not submit either the report or the proposal to a House of Commons pledged to the doctrines of Philosophic Radicalism. "We considered much ourselves," writes Lord Melbourne,[1] "and we consulted much with others as to whether the arrangements of these unions, their meetings, their communications, or their pecuniary funds could be reached or in any way prevented by any new legal provisions; but it appeared upon the whole impossible to do anything effectual unless we proposed such measures as would have been a serious infringement upon the constitutional liberties of the

Laws, though they, with one accord, advocated stringent repression of picketing. Nor were they clear that combinations had, on the whole, hindered the introduction of new machinery, one employer even maintaining that the Unions indirectly promoted its adoption. But the most interesting feature of the correspondence is the extent to which the employers complained of the manner in which their rivals incited, and even subsidised, strikes against attempted reductions of rates. The millowner, whose improved processes gave him an advantage in the market, found any corresponding reduction of piecework rates resisted, not only by his own operatives, but by all the other manufacturers in the district, who sometimes went so far as to publish a joint declaration that any such reduction was "highly inexpedient." The evidence, in fact, from Nassau Senior's point or view, justified his somewhat remarkable proposal to punish employers for conniving at combinations.

[1] Lord Melbourne to Sir Herbert Taylor, September 26, 1831 (*Papers*, chap. v. p. 131). The workmen's combinations began at this time to attract more serious attention from capable students than they had hitherto received. Two able pamphlets, published anonymously, *On Combinations of Trades* (1830), and *Character, Objects, and Effects of Trades Unions* (1834), set forth the constitution and proceedings of the new unions, and criticise their pretensions in a manner which has not since been surpassed. The second of these was by Edward Carlton Tufnell, one of the factory commissioners, and remains, perhaps, the best statement of the case against Trade Unionism. Tufnell also wrote a pamphlet, entitled *Trades Unions and Strikes* (London, 1834, 12mo); and Harriet Martineau one *On the Tendency of Strikes ana Sticks to produce Low Wages* (Durham, 1834, 12mo), neither of which we have seen. A well-informed but hostile article, founded on these materials, appeared in the *Edinburgh Review* for July, 1834. Charles Knight published in the same year a sixpenny pamphlet, *Trades Unions and Strikes* (London, 1834, 99 pp.), which took the form of a bitter denunciation of the whole movement.

country, and to which it would have been impossible to have obtained the consent of Parliament."

The King, however, was greatly alarmed at the meeting of the "Builders' Parliament," and pressed the Cabinet to take strong measures.[1] Mr. Rotch, the member for Knaresborough, gave notice, in April, 1834, of his intention to bring in a Bill designed to make combinations of trades impossible—a measure which would have obtained a large amount of support from the manufacturers.[2]

But although Lord Melbourne's prudent caution saved the Unions from drastic prohibitory laws, the Government lost no opportunity of showing its hostility to the workmen's combinations. When, in August, 1833, the Yorkshire manufacturers presented a memorial on the subject of "the Trades Union," Lord Melbourne directed the answer to be returned that "he considers it unnecessary to repeat the strong opinion entertained by His Majesty's Ministers of the criminal character and the evil effects of the unions described in the Memorial," adding that "no doubt can be entertained that combinations for the purposes enumerated are illegal conspiracies, and liable to be prosecuted as such at common law."[3] The employers scarcely needed this hint. Although combination for the sole purpose of fixing hours or wages had ceased to be illegal, it was possible to prosecute the workmen upon various other pretexts. Sometimes, as in the case of some Lancashire miners in 1832, the Trade Unionists were indicted for illegal combination for merely writing to their employers that a strike would take place.[4] Sometimes the "molestation

[1] See his letter of March 30, 1834, in *Lord Melbourne's Papers*, chap. v.

[2] *Leeds Mercury*, April 26, 1834. Joseph Hume said he had had the "greatest difficulty in prevailing upon the Ministers not to bring in a bill for putting down the Trades Unions." (*Poor Man's Guardian*, March 29, 1834.)

[3] Letter dated September 3, 1833, in *Times*, September 9, 1833.

[4] R. *v.* Bykerdike, 1 Moo and Rob 179, Lancaster Assizes, 1832. A letter was written to certain coalowners, "by order of the Board

or obstruction" prohibited in the Act of 1825 was made to include the mere intimation of the men's intention to strike against the employment of non-unionists. In a remarkable case at Wolverhampton in August, 1835, four potters were imprisoned for intimidation, solely upon evidence by the employers that they had "advanced their prices in consequence of the interference of the defendants who acted as plenipotentiaries for the men," without, as was admitted, the use of even the mildest threat.[1] Picketing, even of the most peaceful kind, was frequently severely punished under this head, as four Southwark shoemakers found, in 1832, to their cost.[2] More generally the men on strike were proceeded against under the laws relating to masters and servants, as in the case of seventeen tanners at Bermondsey in February, 1834, who were sentenced to imprisonment for the offence of leaving their work unfinished.[3]

With the authorities in this temper, their alarm at the growth of the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union may be imagined. A new legal weapon was soon discovered. At the time of the mutiny at the Nore, in 1797, an Act had been passed (37 Geo. III. c. 123) severely penalising the administering of an oath by an unlawful society. In 1819, when political sedition was rife, a measure prohibiting unlawful oaths had formed one of the notorious "Six Acts." In neither case were trade combinations aimed at, though Lord Ellenborough, in an isolated prosecution in 1802,[4] had held that an oath administered by a committee of journeymen shearmen in Wiltshire came within the terms of the earlier statute. It does not seem to have occurred to any one to put the law in force

of Directors for the body of coalminers," stating that, unless certain men were discharged, the miners would strike. Held to be an illegal combination. See *Leeds Mercury*, May 24, 1834.

[1] *Times*, August 22, 1835.

[2] *Poor Man's Guardian*, September 29, 1832.

[3] *Times*, February 27, 1834.

[4] R. *v.* Marks and others, 3 East Rep. 157.

against Trade Unions until the oath-bound confederacy of the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union began to make headway even in the rural villages of the South of England.

The story of the trial and transportation of the Dorchester labourers is the best known episode of early Trade Union history.[1] The agricultural labourers of the southern counties, oppressed by the tacit combinations of the farmers and by the operation of the Corn Laws, as well as exceptionally demoralised by the Old Poor Law, had long been in a state of sullen despair. The specially hard times of 1829 had resulted in outbursts of machine-breaking, rick-burning, and hunger riots, which had been put down, in 1830, by the movement of troops through the disturbed districts, and the appointment of a Special Commission of Assize to try over 1,000 prisoners. With the improvement of trade a general movement for higher wages seems to have been set on foot. In 1832 we find the Duke of Wellington, as Lord Lieutenant of Hampshire, reporting to Lord Melbourne that more than half the labourers in his county were contributing a penny per week to a network of local societies affiliated, as he thought, to some National Union. "The labourers said that they had received directions from the Union not to take less than ten shillings, and that the Union would stand

[1] Lengthy accounts appeared in the newspapers for March and April, 1834. The indictment is given in full in the House of Commons Return, No. 250, of 1835 (June 1st). The legal report is in 6 C. & P. 596 (R. *v.* Loveless and others). The *Times* reported the judge's charge at some length, March 18, 1834, and the case itself March 20, 1834, giving the rules of the projected union. An able article in the *Law Magazine*, vol. xi. pp. 460–72, discusses the law of the case. The defendants subsequently published two statements for popular circulation, viz., *Victims of Whiggery, a statement of the persecution experienced by the Dorchester Labourers*, by George Loveless (London, 1837), and *A narrative of the sufferings of James Loveless, &c.* (London, 1838), which are in the British Museum. See also Mr. Spencer Walpole's *History of England*, vol. iii. chap. xiii. pp. 229–31, and *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, vols. xxii. and xxiii.

by them."[1] These societies, whatever may have been their constitution, had apparently the effect of raising wages not only in Hampshire, but also in the neighbouring counties. In the village of Tolpuddle, in Dorsetshire, as George Loveless tells us, an agreement was made between the farmers and the men, in the presence of the village parson, that the wages should be those paid in other districts. This involved a rise to ten shillings a week. In the following year the farmers repented of their decision, and successively reduced wages, shilling by shilling, until they were paying only seven shillings a week. In this strait the men made inquiries about "the Trades Union," and two delegates from the Grand National visited the village. Upon their information the Lovelesses established "the Friendly Society of Agricultural Labourers," having its "Grand Lodge" at Tolpuddle. For this village club the elaborate ritual and code of rules of one of the national orders of the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union were adopted. No secrecy seems to have been observed, for John Loveless openly ordered of the village painter a figure of "Death painted six feet high for a society of his own,"[2] with which to perform the initiation rites. The farmers took alarm, and induced the local magistrates, on February 21, 1834, to issue placards warning the labourers that any one joining the Union would be sentenced to seven years' transportation. This was no idle threat. Within three days of the publication of the notice the Lovelesses and four other members were arrested and lodged in gaol.

The trial of these unfortunate labourers was a scandalous perversion of the law. The Lovelesses and their

[1] *Lord Melbourne's Papers*, pp. 147–150, letters dated November 3 and 7, 1832. Lord Melbourne seems to have thought that these rural organisations were in connection with the political organisation called the National Union of the Working Classes, founded by William Lovett, in 1831, to support the Reform Bill.

[2] *Times*, March 20, 1834.

friends seem to have been simple-minded Methodists, two of them being itinerant preachers. No accusation was made, and no evidence preferred against them, of anything worse than the playing with oaths, which, as we have seen, formed a part of the initiation ceremony of the Grand National. Not only were they guiltless of any intimidation or outrage, but they had not even struck or presented any application for higher wages. Yet the judge, who had only recently been raised to the bench, charged the grand jury on the case at portentous length, as if the prisoners had committed murder or treason, and inflicted on them, after the briefest of trials, the monstrous sentence of seven years' transportation.

The action of the Government shows how eagerly the Home Secretary accepted the blunder of an inexperienced judge as part of his policy of repression. Lord Melbourne expressed his opinion that "the law has in this case been most properly applied";[1] and the sentence, far from exciting criticism in the Whig Cabinet, was carried out with special celerity. The case was tried on March 18, 1834; before the 30th the prisoners were in the hulks; and by the 15th of the next month Lord Howick was able to say in the House of Commons that their ship had already sailed for Botany Bay.[2]

The Grand National Consolidated Trades Union proved to have a wider influence than the Government expected. The whole machinery of the organisation was turned to the preparation of petitions and the holding of public meetings, and a wave of sympathy rallied, for a few weeks, the drooping energies of the members. Cordial relations were established with the five great Unions which remained outside the ranks, for the northern counties were mainly organised by the Builders' Union, the Leeds, Huddersfield and Bradford District Union, the Clothiers' Union, the Cotton-spinners' Union, and the Potters'

[1] *Lord Melbourne's Papers*, p. 158.

[2] *Times*, 18th, 20th, 31st of March, 1st, 16th, and 19th of April, 1834; *Leeds Mercury*, April 26, 1834.

Union, which, on this occasion, sent delegates to London to assist the executive of the Grand National. The agitation culminated in a monster procession of Trade Unionists to the Home Office to present a petition to Lord Melbourne—the first of the great "demonstrations" which have since become a regular part of the machinery of London politics. The proposal to hold this procession had excited the utmost alarm, both in friends and to foes. The *Times*, with the Parisian events of 1830 still in its memory, wrote leader after leader condemning the project, and Lord Melbourne let it be known that he would refuse to receive any deputation or petition from a procession. Special constables were sworn in, and troops brought into London to prevent a rising. At length the great day arrived (April 21, 1834). Owen and his friends managed the occasion with much skill. In order to avoid interference by the new police, the vacant ground at Copenhagen Fields, on which the processionists assembled, was formally hired from the owner. The trades were regularly marshalled behind thirty-three banners, each man decorated by a red ribbon. At the head of the procession rode, in full canonicals and the scarlet hood of a Doctor of Divinity, the corpulent "chaplain to the Metropolitan Trades Unions," Dr. Arthur S. Wade.[1] The demonstration, in point of numbers, was undoubtedly a success. We learn, for instance, that the tailors alone paraded from 5,000 to 7,000 strong, and the master builders subsequently complained that their works had been entirely suspended through their men's participation. Over a quarter of a million signatures had been obtained to the petition, and, even on the admission of the *Times*, 30,000 persons took part in the procession, representing a proportion of the London of that time equivalent to 100,000 to-day.[2]

[1] A prominent Owenite agitator of the time, incumbent of St. Nicholas, Warwick, who is said to have been inhibited from preaching by his bishop.

[2] *Times*, April 22nd; *Companion to the Newspaper*, May and June,

Meanwhile Radicals of all shades hastened to the rescue. A public meeting was held at the Crown and Anchor Tavern at which Roebuck, Colonel Perronet Thompson, and Daniel O'Connell spoke; and a debate took place in the House of Commons in which the ferocious sentence was strongly attacked by Joseph Hume.[1] But the Government, far from remitting the punishment, refused even to recognise that it was excessive; and the unfortunate labourers were allowed to proceed to their penal exile.[2]

The Dorchester conviction had the effect of causing the oath to be ostensibly dropped out of Trade Union ceremonies, although in particular trades and districts it lingered a few years longer.[3] At their "parliament"

1834. Trade Union accounts declare that 100,000 to 200,000 persons were present. A detailed description of the day is given in Somerville's *Autobiography of a Working Man* (London, 1848), not usually a trustworthy work.

[1] *Times*, April 19, 1834.

[2] The agitation for their release was kept up, both in and out of Parliament, by the "London Dorchester Committee;" and in 1836 the remainder of the sentence was remitted. Through official blundering it was two years later (April, 1838) before five out of the six prisoners returned home. The sixth, as we learn from a circular of the Committee, dated August 20, 1838, had even then not arrived. "Great and lasting honour," writes a well-informed contemporary, "is due to this body of workmen (the London Dorchester Committee), about sixteen in number, by whose indefatigable exertions, extending over a period of five years, and the valuable assistance of Thomas Wakley, M.P. for Finsbury, the same Government who banished the men were compelled to pardon them and bring them home free of expense. From the subscriptions raised by the working classes during this period, amounting to about £1,300, the Committee, on the return of the men, were enabled to place five of them, with their families, in small farms in Essex, the sixth preferring (with his share of the fund) to return to his native place." (Article in the *British Statesman*, April 9, 1842, preserved in Place MSS. 27820—320.) See also House of Commons Return, No. 191 of 1837 (April 12th); and *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, vol. xxxii. p. 253.

[3] The series of "Initiation Parts," or forms to be observed on admission of new members, which are preserved in the archives of the Stonemasons' Society, reveal the steady tendency to simplification of ritual. We have first the old MS. doggerel already described, dating

in April, 1834, the Builders' Union formally abolished the oath. The Grand National quickly adopted the same course; and the Leeds and other Unions followed suit. But the judge's sentence was of no avail to check the aggressive policy of the Unions. Immediately after the excitement of the procession had subsided, one of the most important branches of the Grand National precipitated a serious conflict with its employers. The London tailors, hitherto divided among themselves, formed, in December, 1833, the "First Grand Lodge of Operative Tailors," and resolved to demand a shortening of the hours of labour. The state of mind of the men is significantly shown by the language of their peremptory notice to the masters. "In order," they write, "to stay the ruinous effects which a destructive commercial competition has so long been inflicting on the trade, they have resolved to introduce certain new regulations of labour into the trade, which regulations they intend shall come into force on Monday next." A general strike ensued, in which 20,000 persons are said to have been thrown out of work, the whole burden of their maintenance being cast on the Grand National funds. A levy of eighteenpence per member throughout the country was made in May, 1834, which caused some dissatisfaction; and the proceeds were insufficient to prevent the tailors' strike pay falling to four shillings a week. The result was that the men gradually returned to work on the employers' terms.[1]

probably from 1832. The first print of 1834, whilst retaining a good deal of the ceremonial, turns the liturgy into prose, and the oath into an almost identical "declaration," invoking the "dire displeasure" of the Society in case of treachery. The second print, which bears no date, is much shorter; and the declaration becomes a mere affirmation of adhesion. The Society's circulars of 1838 record the abolition, by vote of the members, of all initiation ceremonies, in view of the Parliamentary Inquiry about to be held into Trade Unionism. But even the simplified form of 1838 retains, in its reference to the workmen as "the real producers of *all* wealth," an unmistakable trace of the Owenite spirit of the Builders' Union of 1832.

[1] *Times*, April 30th to June 10th; House of Lords Debate, April 28th; *Globe*, May 21, 1834.

These disasters, together with innumerable smaller strikes in various parts, all of which were unsuccessful, shook the credit of the Grand National. The executive attempted in vain to stem the torrent of strikes by publishing a "Declaration of the Views and Objects of Trades Unions," in which they deprecated disputes and advocated Co-operative Production.[1] They gave effect to this declaration by refusing to sanction the London shoemakers' demand for increased wages, on the ground that a conflict so soon after the tailors' defeat was inopportune. The result was merely that a general meeting of the London shoemakers voted, by 782 to 506, for secession from the federation, and struck on their own account.[2]

An even more serious blow was the lock-out of the London building trades in July, 1834. These trades in London had joined the Grand Consolidated rather than the Builders' Union; and in the summer of 1834 an act of petty tyranny on the part of a single firm brought about a general conflict. The workmen employed by Messrs. Cubitt had resolved not to drink any beer supplied by Combe, Delafield and Co., in retaliation for the refusal of that firm to employ Trade Unionists. Messrs. Cubitt thereupon refused to allow any other beer to be drunk on their premises, and locked out their workmen. The employers throughout London, angered by the Union's resistance to sub-contract and piecework, embraced this opportunity to insist that all their employees should sign the hated "document." The heads of the Government departments in which building operatives were employed placed themselves in line with private employers by making the same demand.[3] The struggle dragged on until November, 1834, when the document seems to have been tacitly withdrawn, and the men returned to work,

[1] *Leeds Mercury*, May 3, 1834.

[2] See the address of the "Grand Master" to the "Operative Cordwainers of the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union," *Crisis*, June 28, 1834; also *Times*, May 2, 1834.

[3] *Times*, August 21, 1834.

accepting the employers' terms on the other points at issue.[1] We learn from the correspondence of the Stonemasons' Society that this defeat—for such it virtually was—completely broke up the organisation in the London building trade. What was happening to the Builders' Union during these months is not clear. The federal organisation apparently broke up at about this time; and the several trades fell back upon their local clubs and national societies.

Whilst the London builders were thus engaged, similar struggles were going on in the other leading industries. At Leeds, for instance, in May, 1834, the masters were again presenting the "document"; and the men, after much resistance and angry denunciation, were compelled to abandon the Clothiers' Union. The Cotton-spinners, whom we left preparing to carry out Fielden's idea of a general strike for an eight hours day with undiminished wages for all cotton operatives, resolved to demand the reduction of hours from the 1st of March, 1834, the day appointed for the operation of the new Factory Act of 1833, limiting the hours of children to eight per day. Many mills sent in notices, which were simply ignored by the employers. In this they seem to have estimated the weakness of the men correctly; for the expected general strike was deferred by a delegate meeting until the 2nd of June. That date found the men still unprepared for action, and the strike was further postponed until the 1st of September. After that we hear no more of it.

The Oldham operatives did, indeed, in April, 1834, make an unpremeditated attempt to secure eight hours. It happened that the local constables broke up a Trade Union meeting. A rescue took place, followed by an attack on an obnoxious mill, and the shooting of one of the rioters by a "Knobstick." The affray provoked the Oldham working class into a spasm of insurrection. The workers

[1] *Statement of the Master Builders of the Metropolis in explanation of the differences between them and the workmen respecting the Trades Unions* (London, 1834). See also *Times*, July 27, to November 29, 1834.

in all trades, both male and female, ceased work, and held huge meetings on the Moor, where they were addressed by Doherty and others from Manchester, and demanded the eight hours day. Within a week the excitement subsided, and work was resumed.[1]

By the end of the summer it was obvious that the ambitious projects of the Grand National Consolidated and other "Trades Unions" had ended in invariable and complete failure. In spite of the rising prosperity of trade, the strikes for better conditions of labour had been uniformly unsuccessful. In July, 1834, the federal organisations all over the country were breaking up. The great association of half a million members had been completely routed by the employers' vigorous presentation of the "document." Of the actual dissolution of the organisation we have no contemporary record, but the impression which it made on the more sober Trade Unionists may be gathered from the following description, which appeared in a working-class journal seven years afterwards. "We were present," says the editor of the *Trades Journal*, "at many of the meetings of the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union, and have a distinct recollection of the excitement that prevailed in them—of the apparent determination to carry out its principles in opposition to every obstacle—of the enthusiasm exhibited by some of the speakers—of the noisy approbation of the meeting—the loud cries of 'hear hear,' 'bravo,' 'hurra,' 'union for ever,' &c. It was the opinion of many at that time that little real benefit would be effected by this union, as their proceedings were indicative, not of a calm and dispassionate investigation of the causes of existing evils, but of an over-excited state of mind, which would speedily evaporate, and leave them in the same condition

[1] The *Times* honoured these events by long descriptive reports from its "own correspondent," then an unusual practice; see the issues from 17th to 25th of April, 1834. A good account is also to be found in the *Leeds Mercury*, 19th and 26th of April, 1834; see also the *History of the Marcroft Family* (1889), pp. 103–6.

as before. The event proved that this opinion was not ill-founded. A little mole-hill obstructed their onward progress; and rather than commence the labour of removing so puny an obstacle, they chose to turn back, each taking his own path, regardless of the safety or the interests of his neighbour. It was painful to see the deep mortification of the generals and leaders of this quickly inflated army, when left deserted and alone upon the field." [1]

A period of general apathy in the Trade Union world ensued. The "London Dorchester Committee" continued with indomitable perseverance to collect subscriptions and present petitions for the return of the six exiled labourers; but "the Trades Union," together with the ideal from which it sprang, vanished in discredit. The hundreds of thousands of recruits from the new industries or unskilled occupations rapidly reverted to a state of disorganisation. The national "orders" of Tailors and Shoemakers, the extended organisations of Cotton-spinners and Woollen-workers, split up into fragmentary societies. Throughout the country the organised constituents of the Grand National fell back upon their local trade clubs.

The records of the rise and fall of the "New Unionism" of 1830–4 leave us conscious of a vast enlargement in the ideas of the workers, without any corresponding alteration in their tactics in the field. In council they are idealists, dreaming of a new heaven and a new earth, humanitarians, educationalists, socialists, moralists: in battle they are still the struggling, half-emancipated serfs of 1825, armed only with the rude weapons of the strike and boycott; sometimes feared and hated by the propertied classes; sometimes merely despised; always oppressed, and miserably poor. We find, too, that they are actually less successful with the old weapons now that they wield them with new and wider ideas. They get beaten in a rising market

[1] *Trades Journal*, March 1, 1841, probably written by Alexander Hutchinson, general secretary of the Friendly United Smiths of Great Britain and Ireland.

instead of, as hitherto, only in a falling one. And we shall soon see that they did not recover their lost advantage until they again concentrated their efforts on narrower and more manageable aims. But we have first to inquire how they came by the new ideas.

In the bad times which followed the peace of 1815 the writings of Cobbett had attained an extraordinary influence and authority over the whole of that generation of working men. His trenchant denunciation of the governing classes, and his incessant appeals to the wage-earners to assert their right to the whole administration of affairs, were inspired by the political tyranny of the anti-Jacobin reaction, the high prices and heavy taxes, and the apparent creation by "the Funding System" of an upstart class of non-producers living on the interest of the huge debt contracted by the nation during the war—evils the least of which was enough to stimulate an eager politician like Cobbett to the utmost exercise of his unrivalled power of invective. But the working classes were suffering, in addition, from a calamity which no mere politician of that time grasped, in the effects of the new machine and factory industry, which was blindly crushing out the old methods by the mere brute force of competition instead of replacing it with due order and adjustment to the human interests involved. This phenomenon was beyond the comprehension of its victims. Each of them knew what was happening to himself as an individual; but only one man—a manufacturer—seems to have understood what was happening to the entire industry of the country. This man was Robert Owen. To him, therefore, political Democracy, which was all-in-all to Cobbett and his readers, appeared quite secondary to industrial Democracy, or the co-operative ownership and control of industry answerable to the economic co-operation in all industrial processes which had been brought about by machinery and factory organisation, and which had removed manufacture irrevocably from the separate firesides of independent individual producers. With Cobbett and

his followers the first thing to be done was to pass a great Reform Bill, behind which, in their minds, lay only a vague conception of social change. Owen and his more enthusiastic disciples, on the other hand, were persuaded that a universal voluntary association of workers for productive purposes on his principles would render the political organisation of society of comparatively trivial account.

The disillusionment of the newly emancipated Trade Clubs in the collapse of 1825 left the working-class organisations prepared for these wider gospels. Social reform was in the air. "Concerning the misery and degradation of the bulk of the people of England," writes a contemporary observer, "men of every order, as well as every party, unite and speak continually; farmers, parish officers, clergymen, magistrates, judges on the bench, members on either side of both Houses of Parliament, the King in his addresses to the nation, moralists, statesmen, philosophers; and finally the poor creatures themselves, whose complaints are loud and incessant."[1] Cobbett and the Reformers had the first turn. The chief political organisation of the working classes during the Reform Bill agitation began as a trade club. In 1831 a few carpenters met at their house of call in Argyle Street, Oxford Street, to form a "Metropolitan Trades Union," which was to include all trades, and to undertake, besides its Trade Union functions, a vague scheme of co-operative production and a political agitation for the franchise.[2] But under the influence of William Lovett the last object soon thrust aside all the rest. The purely Trade Union aims were dropped; the Owenite aspirations sank into the background; and under the title of the "National Union of the Working Classes" the humble carpenters' society expanded into a national

[1] *England and America: a Comparison of the Social and Political State of Both Nations* (London, 1833, 2 vols.).

[2] *Poor Man's Guardian*, March 12, 1831; Place MSS. 27791—246, 272.

organisation for obtaining Manhood Suffrage. As such it occupies, during the political turmoil of 1831–2, by far the largest place in the history of working-class organisation, and was largely implicated in the agitation and disturbances connected with the Reform Bill.[1]

The Reform Bill came and passed, but no Manhood Suffrage. The effect of this disappointment at the hands of the most advanced political party in the country is thus described by Francis Place, now become an outside observer of the Trade Union Movement. "The year (1833) ended leaving the (National) Union (of the Working Classes) in a state of much depression. The nonsensical doctrines preached by Robert Owen and others respecting communities and goods in common; abundance of everything man ought to desire, and all for four hours' labour out of every twenty-four; the right of every man to his share of the earth in common, and his right to whatever his hands had been employed upon; the power of masters under the present system to give just what wages they pleased; the right of the labourer to such wages as would maintain him and his in comfort for eight or ten hours' labour; the right of every man who was unemployed to employment and to such an amount of wages as have been indicated—and other matters of a similar kind which were continually inculcated by the working men's political unions, by many small knots of persons, printed in small pamphlets and handbills which were sold twelve for a penny and distributed to a great extent—had pushed politics aside . . . among the working people. These pamphlets were written almost wholly by men of talent and of some standing in the world, professional men, gentlemen, manufacturers, tradesmen, and men called literary. The consequence was that a very large proportion of the working people in England and Scotland became persuaded that they had only to combine, as it was concluded they might easily do, to

[1] See the volumes of the *Poor Man's Guardian*, preserved in the British Museum.

compel not only a considerable advance of wages all round, but employment for every one, man and woman, who needed it, at short hours. This notion induced them to form themselves into Trades Unions in a manner and to an extent never before known." [1]

This jumble of ordinary Trade Union aims and communist aspirations, described from the hostile point of view of a fanatical Malthusian and staunch believer in the "Wage Fund," probably fairly represents the character of the Owenite propaganda. It made an ineradicable impression on the working-class leaders of that generation, and inspired the great surge of solidarity which rendered possible the gigantic enlistments of the Grand National, with its unprecedented regiments of agricultural labourers and women. Its enlargement of consciousness of the working class was no doubt a good in itself which no mistakes in practical policy could wholly cancel. But Owen did mischief as well as good ; and as both the evil and the good live after him—for nothing that Owen did can yet be said to be interred with his bones—it is necessary to examine his Trade Union doctrine in some detail. He was at his best when, as the experienced captain of industry, he denounced with fervent emphasis that lowering of the Standard of Life which was the result of the creed of universal competition. It was to combat this that he advocated Factory Legislation, and promoted

[1] Place MSS. 27797—290; see a similar account in the *Life of William Lovett*, by himself, p. 86. James Mill writes to Lord Brougham on September 3, 1832, as follows: "Nothing can be conceived more mischievous than the doctrines which have been preached to the common people. . . . The nonsense to which your lordship alludes about the right of the labourer to the whole produce of the country, wages, profits, and rent all included, is the mad nonsense of our friend Hodgskin, which he has published as a system, and propagates with the zeal of perfect fanaticism. . . . The illicit cheap publications, in which the doctrine of the right of the labouring people, who they say are the only producers, to all that is produced, is very generally preached, . . . are superseding the Sunday newspapers and every other channel through which the people might get better information." (Bain's *James Mill*, p. 363, London, 1882.)

combinations "to fix a maximum time and a minimum wages"; and it was by thus attempting to secure the workers' Standard of Life by legislation and Trade Union action that he gained the influential support, not only of philanthropists, but also of certain high-minded manufacturers, with whose aid he formed, in December, 1833, the "Society for National Regeneration."[1] The most definite proposal of this society, the shortening of the hours of labour to eight per day, was what led to that suggestion of Fielden's on which the Lancashire cotton operatives acted in their abortive general strike for an eight hours day. It also produced the long series of "Short Time Committees" in the textile towns whose persistent agitation eventually secured the passing of the Ten Hours Bill, itself only an instalment of our great Factory Code. History has emphatically justified Owen on this side of his labour policy.

But there was a Utopian side to it which acted more questionably. The working-class world became, under his influence, inflated with a premature conception and committed to an impracticable working scheme of social organisation. He proved himself an able thinker and seer when he pointed out that the horrible poverty of the time was a new economic phenomenon, the inevitable result of unfettered competition and irresponsible individual ownership of the means of production now that those means had become enormously expensive and yet compact enough to employ hundreds of men under the orders of a few, besides being so prodigiously efficient as to drive the older methods quite out of the market. But, from the point of view of the practical statesman, it must be confessed that he also showed himself something of a simpleton in supposing, or at least assuming, that com-

[1] The prospectus of this Society is in our possession. A copy is given in the *Morning Chronicle*, December 7, 1833. It seems to have had for its organ a penny weekly called *The Herald of the Rights of Industry*, some numbers of which are in the British Museum. Professor Foxwell has kindly drawn our attention to a further reference to it in the *Life of James Deacon Hume*, p. 55.

petition could be abolished and ownership socialised by organising voluntary associations to supersede both the millowners and the State. He had tried the experiment in America with the famous community of New Harmony, and its failure had for the time thoroughly disgusted him with communities. But his disgust was not disillusion, for its only practical effect was to set him to repeat the experiment with the Trade Unions. Under his teaching the Trade Unionists came to believe that it was possible, by a universal non-political compact of the wage-earners, to raise wages and shorten the hours of labour "to an extent," as Place puts it, "which, at no very distant time, would give them the whole proceeds of their labour." The function of the brain-worker as the organiser of industry was disregarded, possibly because, in the cotton industry (in which Owen had made a fortune), it plays but an insignificant part in the actual productive processes, and is mainly concerned with that pursuit of cheap markets to buy in and dear markets to sell in which formed no part of the Utopian commonwealth at which "the Trades Union" aimed. The existing capitalists and managers were therefore considered as usurpers to be as soon as possible superseded by the elected representatives of voluntary and sectional associations of producers. The modern Socialist proposal to substitute the officials of the Municipality or State was unthinkable at a period when all local governing bodies were notoriously inefficient and corrupt, and Parliament practically an oligarchy. Under the system proposed by Owen the instruments of production were to become the property, not of the whole community, but of the particular set of workers who used them. The Trade Unions were to be transformed into "national companies" to carry on all the manufactures.[1] The Agricultural Union was to take possession of the land, the Miners' Union of the mines, the textile Unions of the factories. Each trade was to be

[1] See Owen's elaborate speech, reported in the *Crisis*, October 12, 1833

carried on by its particular Trade Union, centralised in one "Grand Lodge."

Of all Owen's attempts to reduce his Socialism to practice, this was certainly the very worst. For his short-lived communities there was at least this excuse: that within their own area they were to be perfectly homogenous little Socialist States. There were to be no conflicting sections; and profit-making and competition were to be effectually eliminated. But in "the Trades Union," as he conceived it, the mere combination of all the workmen in a trade as co-operative producers no more abolished commercial competition than a combination of all the employers in it as a Joint Stock Company. In effect, his Grand Lodges would have been simply the head offices of huge Joint Stock Companies owning the entire means of production in their industry, and subject to no control by the community as a whole. They would therefore have been in a position at any moment to close their ranks, and admit fresh generations of workers only as employees at competitive wages instead of as shareholders, thus creating at one stroke a new capitalist class and a new proletariat. Further, the improvident shareholders would soon have begun to sell their shares in order to spend their capital, and thus to drop with their children into the new proletariat; whilst the enterprising and capable shareholders would equally have sold their shares to buy into other and momentarily more profitable trades. Thus there would have been not only a capitalist class and proletariat, but a speculative stock market. Finally there would have come a competitive struggle between the Joint Stock Unions to supplant one another in the various departments of industry. Thus, the shipwrights, making wooden ships, would have found the boilermakers competing for their business by making iron ships, and would have had either to succumb or to transform their wooden ship capital into iron ship capital and enter into competition with the boilermakers as commercial rivals in the same trade. This difficulty was staring Owen

in the face when he entered the Trade Union Movement; for the trades, then as now, were in continual perplexity as to the exact boundaries between them: for example, the minute books of the newly-formed Joiners' Society in Glasgow (whose secretary was a leading Owenite) show that its great difficulty was the demarcation of its trade against the cabinetmaker and the engineer-patternmaker, each of whom claimed certain technical operations as proper to himself alone. In short, the Socialism of Owen led him to propose a practical scheme which was not even socialistic, and which, if it could possibly have been carried out, would have simply arbitrarily redistributed the capital of the country without altering or superseding the capitalist system in the least.

All this will be so obvious to those who comprehend our capitalist system that they will have some difficulty in believing that it could have escaped so clever a man and so experienced and successful a capitalist as Owen. How far he made it a rule to deliberately shut his eyes to the difficulties that met him, from a burning conviction that any change was better than leaving matters entirely alone, cannot even be guessed; but it is quite certain that to a great extent he acted in perfect good faith, simply not knowing thoroughly what he was about. He had a boundless belief in the power of education to form character; and if any scheme promised just sufficient respite from poverty and degradation to enable him and his disciples to educate one generation of the country's children, he was ready to leave all economic consequences to be dealt with by "the New Moral World" which that generation's Owenite schooling would have created. Doubtless he thought that "the Trades Union" promised him this much; and besides, he did not foresee its economic consequences. He was disabled by that confident sciolism and prejudice which has led generations of Socialists to borrow from Adam Smith and the "classic" economists the erroneous theory that labour is by itself the creator of value, without going on to master that impregnable

and more difficult law of economic rent which is the very corner-stone of collectivist economy. He took his economics from his friend William Thompson,[1] who, like Hodgskin and Hodgskin's illustrious disciple, Karl Marx, overlooked the law of rent in his calculations, and taught that all exchange values could be measured in terms of "labour time" alone. Part of the Owenite activity of the time actually resulted in the opening of labour bazaars, in which the prices were fixed in minutes. The fact that the expenditure of labour required to bring articles of the same desirability to market varies enormously according to natural differences in fertility of soil, distance to be traversed, proximity to good highways, waterways, or ports, accessibility of water-power or steam fuel, and a hundred other circumstances, including the organising ability and executive dexterity of the producer, was left entirely out of account. Owen assumed that the labour of the miner and that of the agricultural labourer would spontaneously exchange equitably at par of hours and minutes when the miners had received a monopoly of the bowels of the country, and the agricultural labourers of its skin. He did not even foresee that the Miners' Union might be inclined to close its ranks against newcomers from the farm labourers, or that the Agricultural Union might refuse to cede sites for the Builders' Union to work upon. In short, the difficult economic problem of the equitable sharing of the advantages of superior sites and opportunities never so much as occurred to the enthusiastic Owenite economists of this period.

One question, and that the most immediately important of all, was never seriously faced: How was the transfer of the industries from the capitalists to the Unions to be effected in the teeth of a hostile and well-armed Government? The answer must have been that the overwhelming numbers of "the Trades Union" would render conflict impossible. At all events, Owen, like the early Christians,

[1] *Inquiry into the Principles of the Distribution of Wealth most conducive to Human Happiness*, by William Thompson (London, 1824).

habitually spoke as if the Day of Judgment of the existing order of society was at hand. The next six months, in his view, were always going to see the "New Moral World" really established. The change from the capitalist system to a complete organisation of industry under voluntary associations of producers was to "come suddenly upon society like a thief in the night." "One year," comments his disciple, "may disorganise the whole fabric of the old world, and transfer, by a sudden spring, the whole political government of the country from the master to the servant."[1] It is impossible not to regret that the first introduction of the English Trade Unionist to Socialism should have been effected by a foredoomed scheme which violated every economic principle of Collectivism, and left the indispensable political preliminaries to pure chance.

It was under the influence of these large plans and confident hopes that the Trade Unions were emboldened to adopt the haughty attitude and contemptuous language towards the masters which provoked the Manchester and Liverpool employers to meet the challenge of the Builders' Union by "the Document." The "intolerable tyranny" of the Unions, so much harped on by contemporary writers, represents, to a large extent, nothing more than the rather bumptious expression of the Trade Unionists' feeling that they were the rightful directors of industry, entitled to choose the processes, and select their fellow-workers and even their foremen. And it must be remembered that this occurred at a period when class prejudice was so strong that any attempt at a parley made by the workers, however respectfully, was regarded as presumptuous and unbecoming. Hence the working class had always too much reason to believe that civility on their part would be thrown away. It is certain that during the Owenite intoxication the impracticable expectations of national dominion on the part of the wage-earners were met with an equally unreasonable determination by the governing classes to keep the working men in a state not

[1] Leading article in the *Crisis*, October 12, 1833.

merely of subjection, but of abject submission. The continued exclusion of the workmen from the franchise made constitutional action on their side impossible. The employers, on the other hand, used their political and magisterial power against the men without scruple, inciting a willing Government to attack the workmen's combinations by every possible perversion of the law and partiality in its administration. Regarding absolute control over the conduct of their workpeople as a *sine quâ non* of industrial organisation, even the genuine philanthropists among them insisted on despotic authority in the factory or workshop. Against the abuse of this authority there was practically no guarantee. On the other side it can be shown that large sections of the wage-earners were not only moderate in their demands, but submissive in their behaviour. As a rule wherever we find exceptional aggression and violence on the part of the operatives we discover exceptional tyranny on the side of the employers. To give an example or two, the continual outrages which disgrace the annals of Glasgow Trade Unionism for the first forty years of this century are accounted for by the reports of the various Parliamentary Inquiries which mark out the Glasgow millowners as extraordinarily autocratic in their views and tyrannous in their conduct. Again, the aggressive conduct of certain sections of the building trades is frequently complained of in the capitalist press between 1830–40. But the agreements which the large contractors of that time required "all those to sign who enter into their employ," printed copies of which are still extant, show that the demands of the employers were intolerably arbitrary.[1] Then there is the case of the miners of Great Britain, who were in very

[1] A specimen dated 1837 is preserved by the Stonemasons' Society, according to which a Liverpool contractor bound all his employees to serve him at a fixed wage for a long term of years, any time lost by sickness or otherwise not to be paid for and to be added to the term; all "lawful commands" to be obeyed; and no present or future club or other society to be joined without the employer's consent.

ill repute for riotous proceedings from 1837–44. The provocation they received may be judged from a manifesto issued by Lord Londonderry in his dual capacity as Mine Owner and Lord Lieutenant of Durham County during the great strike of the miners in 1844 for fairer terms of hiring. He not only superintends, as Lord Lieutenant, the wholesale eviction of the strikers from their homes, and their supersession by Irishmen specially imported from his Irish estates, but he peremptorily orders the resident traders in "his town of Seaham," on pain of forfeiting his custom and protection, to refuse to supply provisions to the workmen engaged in what he deems "an unjust and senseless warfare *against their proprietors and masters.*"[1] The same intolerance marks the magazines and journals of the dominant classes of the period. It seems to have been habitually taken for granted that the workman had not merely to fulfil his contract of service, but to yield implicit obedience in the details of his working life to the will of his master. Combinations and strikes on the part of the "lower orders" were regarded as futile and disorderly attempts to escape from their natural position of social subservience. In short, the majority of employers,

[1] See his manifestoes reprinted in *Northern Star*, July 6th and July 27, 1844. "Lord Londonderry again warns all the shopkeepers and tradesmen in his town of Seaham that if they still give credit to pitmen who hold off work, and continue in the Union, such men will be marked by his agents and overmen, and will never be employed in his collieries again; and the shopkeepers may be assured that they will never have any custom or dealings with them from Lord Londonderry's large concerns that he can in any manner prevent.

"Lord Londonderry further informs the traders and shopkeepers that having by his measures increased very largely the last year's trade to Seaham, and if credit is so improperly and so fatally given to his unreasonable pitmen, thereby prolonging the injurious strike, it is his firm determination to carry back all the outlay of his concerns even to Newcastle.

"Because it is neither fair, just, or equitable that the resident traders in his own town should combine and assist the infatuated workmen and pitmen in prolonging their own miseries by continuing an insane strike, and an unjust and senseless warfare against their proprietors and masters."

even in this time of negro emancipation, seem to have been unconsciously acting upon the dictum subsequently attributed to Henry Clay, the champion of American slavery, that "the true solution of the contest of all time between labour and capital is that capital should own the labourer whether white or black."

The closing scene of Owen's first and last attempt at "the Trades Union" shows how ephemeral had been his participation in the real life of the Trade Union Movement. In August, 1834, he called together one of his usual miscellaneous congresses, consisting of delegates from all kinds of Owenite societies, with a few from the Trade Unions. At this congress the "Grand National Consolidated Trades Union," which was to have brought to its feet Government, landlords, and employers, was formally converted into the "British and Foreign Consolidated Association of Industry, Humanity, and Knowledge," having for its aim the establishment of a "New Moral World" by the reconciliation of all classes. Beyond one or two small and futile experiments in co-operative production, it had attempted nothing to realise Owen's Utopia. Its whole powers had been spent, seemingly with his own consent and encouragement, in a series of aggressive strikes. For all that, Owen's meteoric appearance in the Trade Union world left a deep impression on the movement. The minute books and other contemporary records of the Trade Unions of the next decade abound in Owenite phraseology, such as the classification of society into the "idle" and the "industrious" classes, the latter apparently meaning—and being certainly understood to mean—only the manual workers. More important is the persistence of the idea that the Trade Unions, as Associations of Producers, should recover control of the instruments of production. From this time forth innumerable attempts were made, by one Trade Union or another, to employ its own members in Productive Co-operation. A long series of industrial disasters, culminating in the great losses of 1874, has, even now,

scarcely eradicated the last remnant of this Joint Stock Individualism from the idealists of the Trade Union Movement. Outside the organised ranks his effect upon general working-class opinion was, as Place remarks, enormous, as we could abundantly show were we here concerned with the "Union Shops," "Equitable Labour Exchanges," and industrial communities which may be considered the most direct result of the Owenite propaganda, or with the fortunes of the innumerable co-operative associations of producers, whose delegates formed the backbone of the Owenite congresses of these years.[1]

The Trade Union Movement was not absolutely left for dead when Owen quitted the field. The skilled mechanics of the printing and engineering trades had, as we shall presently see, held aloof from the general movement, and their trade clubs were unaffected either by the Owenite boom or its subsequent collapse. In some other trades the inflation of 1830–4 spread itself out over a few more years. The Potters' Union went on increasing in strength, and in 1835 gained a notable victory over the employers, when a "Green Book of Prices" was agreed to, which long remained famous in the trade. Renewed demands led to the formation by the employers of a Chamber of Commerce to resist the men's aggression. The "yearly bond" was rigidly insisted upon, and a great strike ensued, which ended in 1837 in the complete collapse of the Union. In 1836 the Scottish compositors formed the General Typographical Association of Scotland, which for a few years exercised an effective control over the trade. The same year saw a notable strike by the Preston Cotton-spinners, from which is dated the general adoption of the self-acting mule.[2] But the most permanent effect is seen in

[1] Some account of these developments will be found in *The Co-operative Movement in Great Britain*, by Beatrice Potter (Mrs. Sidney Webb).

[2] See Ashworth's paper before British Association, 1837; *Remarks upon the Importance of an Inquiry into the Amount and Appropriation of Wages by the Working Classes*, by W. Felkin (London, 1837, 16 pp.).

the building trades. The federal Unions of Plumbers, Bricklayers, and Carpenters have preserved an unbroken existence down to the present day,[1] whilst the Friendly Society of Operative Stonemasons has remained throughout the century one of the most powerful of English Unions. The fortnightly circulars of the English Stonemasons reveal, for a few years, not only a vigorous life and quick growth, but also many successful short strikes to secure Working Rules and to maintain Time Wages. The Scottish Stonemasons are referred to as being even more active and influential in trade regulation, and as having included practically all the Scottish masons. There is evidence, too, of informal federal action between the National Unions of Stonemasons, Carpenters, and Bricklayers. Unfortunately the absence of such modern machinery of organisation as Trades Councils, Trade Union Congresses, and standing joint committees prevented the scattered sectional organisations from forming any general movement. This state of things was broken into during the year 1837 by the sensational strikes in Glasgow, the prolonged legal prosecution and severe punishment of their leaders, and the appointment of a Parliamentary Committee of Inquiry into the results of the repeal of the Combination Laws.

We do not propose to enter here into the details of the famous trial of the five Glasgow cotton-spinners for conspiracy, violent intimidation, and for the murder of fellow-workers. But it is one of the "leading cases" of Trade Union history, and the manifestations of feeling which it provoked show to the depths the state of mind

[1] The United Society of Operative Plumbers (reorganised 1848) still dominates its branch of the trade, and retains the federal constitution of the Builders' Union. The sister organisations of carpenters and bricklayers (now styled the General Union of Carpenters and Joiners, and the United Operative Bricklayers' Trade and Accident Society) have been overtaken and somewhat overshadowed by the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners and the Operative Bricklayers' Society respectively.

of the working classes.[1] The evidence given in court, and repeated before the Select Committee of 1838, leaves no reasonable doubt that the Cotton-spinners' Union in its corporate capacity had initiated a reign of terror, and that some of the incriminated members had been personally guilty not of instigation alone, but of actual violence, if not of murder. In spite of this, the whole body of working-class opinion was on their side, and the sentence of seven years' transportation was received with as much indignation as that upon the Dorchester labourers four years before. This was one of the natural effects of the class despotism and scarcely veiled rebellion which we have already described. The use of violence by working men, either against obnoxious employers or against traitors in their own ranks, was regarded in much the same way as the political offences of a subject race under foreign dominion. Such deeds did not, in fact, necessarily indicate any moral turpitude on the part of the perpetrators. No one accused the five Glasgow cotton-spinners of bad private character or conduct, and at least four out of the five were men of acknowledged integrity and devotedness.[2] Their unjust treatment whilst awaiting trial, and still more their sentence to transportation, enlisted the sympathy of the Parliamentary Radicals, and Wakley, the member for Finsbury, did not hesitate to

[1] Besides securing full reports in the newspapers, the Trade Union committee conducting the case published at a low price an account of the trial in parts, which has not been preserved. Two other exhaustive reports were issued, and may still be consulted, viz., *Report of the trial of Thomas Hunter and other operative cotton-spinners in Glasgow in* 1838, by Archibald Swinton (Edinburgh, 1838), and *The trial of Thomas Hunter, &c., the Glasgow Cotton-spinners*, by James Marshall (Glasgow, 1838). See also the *Autobiography of Sir Archibald Alison* (London, 1883); the *Northern Star* for 1837–8; the *Annual Register* for 1838, pp. 206–7; and the evidence before the Select Committee on Combinations, 1838.

[2] The five prisoners were pardoned in 1840, in consequence of their exemplary conduct. There is a joint letter by them in the *Trades Journal* for August, 1840, relating to the subscriptions raised for them by a London committee.

bring their case before the House of Commons as one of legal persecution and injustice.

At this time the trade societies of Dublin and Cork had caused serious complaint by attempting to establish, and not without violence, an effective monopoly in certain skilled industries. Their action had been reproved by Daniel O'Connell, whom they, in their turn, had repudiated and denounced. O'Connell defeated Wakley's friendly motion for an inquiry into the cotton-spinners' case by a serious indictment of Trade Unionism. By a masterly analysis of the rules of the Irish societies, which, it must be confessed, were abominably selfish, he condemned, in a speech of great power, all attempts on the part of trade combinations to regulate the conditions of labour. The well-established methods of modern Trade Unionism, such as the maintenance of a minimum rate, received from him the same condemnation as the unsocial and oppressive monopolies for which the Irish trades had long been notorious. The Government met this speech by granting a Select Committee to inquire into the whole question; and Trade Unionism accordingly found itself once more on its defence as a permanent element in social organisation. The case of the Glasgow cotton-spinners and the appointment of this Parliamentary Committee for the moment revived the sentiment of solidarity in the Trade Union world. A joint committee of the Glasgow trades was formed to collect subscriptions for the defence of the prisoners; and communications for this purpose were made to all the known Trade Unions. Considerable funds were subscribed, as the trial was repeatedly postponed, at great expense to the prisoners; and when at last, in January, 1838, they were convicted and sentenced, a combined agitation for some mitigation of their punishment was begun. By this time it had become known that some kind of inquiry into Trade Unionism was in contemplation. The Unions at once set their house in order. The Stonemasons, who had already given up the administration of oaths, resolved, for greater security against

illegal practices, "that all forms of regalia, initiation, and passwords be dispensed with and entirely abolished." [1] The Dublin Plasterers formally suspended their exclusive rules, and deferred the issue of a new edition until after the inquiry.[2] In Glasgow, the chief seat of the disorder, many societies—among others, the local Carpenters—deliberately burned their minute books and archives for the past year. The London societies appointed a committee, "The London Trades Combination Committee," to conduct the Unionist case in the Parliamentary inquiry. Lovett, then well known as a Radical politician, became secretary, and issued a stirring address to the Trade Unions throughout the country asking for subscriptions and evidence.[3] But the Parliamentary Committee proved both perfunctory and inconclusive. The Government, which had conceded it merely to rid itself of the importunity of Wakley on the one hand and O'Connell on the other, had evidently no intention of taking any action on the subject; and the Committee, always thinly attended, made no attempt at a general inquiry, and confined itself practically to Dublin and Glasgow. O'Connell got the opportunity he desired of demonstrating, through selected witnesses, the violent and exclusive spirit which animated the Irish Unions. With regard to Glasgow, the chief witness was Sheriff, afterwards Sir Archibald, Alison, whose vigorous action had quelled the cotton-spinners in that city. It was scarcely necessary to call witnesses on behalf of the Unions; but John Doherty, then become a master-printer and bookseller, was allowed to describe the Manchester spinners' organisation and the ill-fated associations of 1829–31. The inquiry resulted in nothing but the presentation to the House of two

[1] Stonemasons' *Fortnightly Circular*, January 19, 1838.

[2] Evidence of W. Darcy, the secretary, second report of 1838 Committee, p. 130.

[3] Circular dated March 1, 1838, in Stonemasons' archives; and *An Address from the London Trades Committee appointed to watch the Parliamentary Inquiry into Combinations* (London, 1838).

volumes of evidence, without even so much as a report. It seems to have been expected that the Committee would be reappointed to complete its task; but when the next session came the matter was quietly dropped.

The temporary fillip given by the cotton-spinners' trial and the Parliamentary Committee did not stop the steady decline of Trade Unionism throughout the country. Trade, which had been on the wane since 1836, grew suddenly worse. The decade closed with three of the leanest years ever known; and widespread distress prevailed. The membership of the surviving Trade Unions rapidly decreased. The English Stonemasons, perhaps the strongest of the contemporary societies, reduced themselves, in 1841, to absolute bankruptcy by their disastrous strike against an obnoxious foreman on the rebuilding of the Houses of Parliament. The Scottish Stonemasons' Society, of equal or greater strength, collapsed at about the same time, from causes not known to us. The Glasgow trades had been completely disorganised by the disasters of 1837. The Lancashire textile operatives showed no sign of life; whilst such growing societies as the Ironfounders, the Journeymen Steam-Engine Makers and Millwrights, and the Boilermakers were crippled by the heavy drafts made upon their funds by unemployed members. The state of mind of the working classes was no more propitious than the state of trade. Fierce discontent and sullen anger are the characteristics of this period. Hatred of the New Poor Law, of the iniquitous taxes on food, of the general oppression by the dominant classes, blazes out in the Trade Union records of the time. The agitation for the "Six Points," set on foot by Lovett and others in the Working Men's Association of 1836, became the centre of working-class aspiration. The *Northern Star*, started at the end of 1837, rapidly distanced all other provincial journals in circulation. The lecturers of the Anti-Corn Law League increased the popular discontent, even when their own particular panacea failed to find acceptance. A general despair of constitu-

tional reform led to the growing supremacy of the "Physical Force" section of the Chartists, and to the insurrectionism of 1839–42.

The political devolopments of these years are outside the scope of this work. The Chartist Movement plays the most important part in working-class annals from 1837 to 1842, and does not quit the stage until 1848. Made respectable by sincerity, devotion, and even heroism in the rank and file, it was disgraced by the fustian of its orators and the political and economic quackery of its pretentious and incompetent leaders, whose jealousies and intrigues finally brought it to nought. In all these respects it is so typical of nineteenth century revolutionary movements that an adequate history of it would be of extreme value to our young Democracy. Here it is only necessary to say that there is no reason to believe that the Trade Unions at any time became part and parcel of the Chartist Movement, as they had, during 1833–4, of the Owenite agitation, though their members furnished some of the most ardent supporters of the Charter. Individual trades, such as the shoemakers, seem to have been thoroughly permeated with Chartism, and were always attempting to rally other trade societies to the cause. The angry strikes of 1842 in Lancashire and the Midlands, promoted, as some said, by the Anti-Corn Law League, were "captured" by the Chartists, and almost converted into political rebellions. The delegate meeting of the Lancashire and Yorkshire trade clubs, which was conducting the "general strike" then in progress "for the wages of 1840," resolved in August, 1842, to recommend all wage-earners "to cease work until the Charter becomes the law of the land."[1] For a few weeks, indeed, it looked as if the Trade Union Movement, such as it was, would become merged in the political current. But the manifest absurdity of persuading starving men to remain on strike until the whole political machinery of the country had been altered, must have quickly become

[1] *Northern Star*, August 20, 1842.

apparent to the shrewder Trade Unionists. When Chartist meetings at Sheffield were calling for a "general strike" to obtain the Charter, the secretaries of seven local Unions wrote to the newspapers explaining that their trades had nothing to do with the meetings or the resolutions.[1] And it may be doubted whether in any case a Trade Union itself, as distinguished from particular members who happened to be delegates, made any formal profession of adherence to Chartism. In the contemporary Trade Union records that are still extant, such as those of the Bookbinders, Compositors, Ironfounders, Cotton-spinners, Steam-engine makers, and Stonemasons, there are no traces of Chartist resolutions; although denunciations of the "Notorious New Poor Law oppression" abound in the *Fortnightly Circular* of the Stonemasons;[2] whilst the Ironfounders, Compositors, and Cotton-spinners pass resolutions in favour of Free Trade. A partial explanation of this reticence on the more exciting topic of the Charter is doubtless to be found in the universally adopted rule excluding politics and religion from Trade Union discussions—a rule which was, in 1842, protested against by an enthusiastic Chartist delegate from the Bookbinders at the Manchester Conference.[3] There must, however, have been something more than mere obedience to the rule in the unwillingness of the trade societies to be mixed up with the Chartist agitation. The rule had not prevented the organised trades of 1831–2 from taking a prominent part in the Reform Bill Movement. The banners of the Edinburgh trade clubs were conspicuous in the public demonstration on the rejection of the Bill of 1831. When the House of Lords gave way, the Birmingham Trade Unions themselves organised a triumphal procession, which was discountenanced by the middle class.[4] The

[1] *Sheffield Iris*, August, 1842.

[2] See, for instance, that for October, 1839.

[3] *Northern Star*, August 20, 1842.

[4] *History of Birmingham*, by W. Hutton (Birmingham, edition of 1835), p. 149.

records of the London Brushmakers show that they even subscribed from the Union funds to Reform associations. But we never find the trade societies of 1839–42 contributing to Chartist funds, or even collecting money for Chartist victims. The cases of Frost, Williams, and Jones, the Newport rebels of 1839, were at least as deserving of the working-class sympathy as those of the Glasgow cotton-spinners. But the Trade Unions showed no inclination to subscribe money or get up petitions in aid of them. "Never," writes Fergus O'Connor, in 1846, "was there more criminal apathy than that manifested by the trades of Great Britain to the sufferings of those men;" and he adds, "that if one half that was done for the Dorchester labourers or the Glasgow cotton-spinners had been done for Frost, Williams, and Jones, they would long since have been restored." [1]

Insurrectionism, whether Owenite or Chartist, was, in fact, losing its attraction for the working-class mind. Robert Owen's economic axioms of the extinction of profit and the elimination of the profit-maker were, during these very years, passing into the new Co-operative Movement, inaugurated in 1844 by the Rochdale Pioneers. The believers in a "new system of society," to be brought about by universal agreement, were henceforth to be found in the ranks of the commercial-minded Co-operators rather than in those of the militant Trade Unionists. Chartism, meanwhile, had degenerated from Lovett's high ideal of a complete political democracy to an ignoble scramble for the ownership of small plots of land. The example of the French Revolution of 1848 fanned the dying embers for a few weeks into a new flame; and many of the London trades swung into the somewhat theatrical fête of April 10, 1848, swelling the procession against which the Duke of Wellington had marshalled the London middle class. But the danger of revolution had passed away. A new generation of workmen was growing up, to whom the worst of the old oppression was unknown, and who had

[1] *Northern Star*, August 24, 1846.

imbibed the economic and political philosophy of the middle-class reformers. Bentham, Ricardo, and Grote were read only by a few; but the activity of such popular educationalists as Lord Brougham and Charles Knight propagated "useful knowledge" to all the members of the Mechanics' Institutes and the readers of the *Penny Magazine*. The middle-class ideas of "free enterprise" and "unrestricted competition" which were thus diffused received a great impetus from the extraordinary propaganda of the Anti-Corn Law League, and the general progress of Free Trade. Fergus O'Connor and Bronterre O'Brien struggled in vain against the growing dominance of Cobden and Bright as leaders of working-class opinion. And so we find in the Trade Union records of 1847–8, that vigorous resistance begins to be made to any movement in support of the old ideals. The Steam-Engine Makers' Society suspended some of their branches for depositing the branch funds in Fergus O'Connor's Land Bank. When two branches of the Stonemasons' Society propose the same investment, the others indignantly protest against it as an absurd political speculation. And it is significant that these protests came, not from the cautious elders whose enthusiasm had outlived many failures, but from those who had never shared the old faith. When in 1848 the Yorkshire Woolstaplers proposed to take a farm upon which to set to work their unemployed men, it was the younger members, as we are expressly told, who strenuously but vainly resisted this action, which resulted ruinously for the society.

All this makes the close of the "revolutionary" period of the Trade Union Movement. For the next quarter of a century we shall watch the development of the new ideas and the gradual building up of the great "amalgamated" societies of skilled artisans, with their centralised administration, friendly society benefits, and the substitution, wherever possible, of Industrial Diplomacy for the ruder methods of the Class War.

CHAPTER IV.

THE NEW SPIRIT AND THE NEW MODEL.

[1843–1860.]

We have seen the magnificent hopes of 1829–42 ending in bitter disillusionment: we shall now see the Trade Unionists of the next generation largely successful in reaching their more limited aims. Laying aside all projects of Social Revolution, they set themselves resolutely to resist the worst of the legal and industrial oppressions from which they suffered, and slowly built up for this purpose organisations which have become integral parts of the structure of a modern industrial state. This success we attribute mainly to the spread of education among the rank and file, and the more practical counsels which began, after 1842, to influence the Trade Union world. But we must not overlook the effect of economic changes. The period between 1825 and 1848 was remarkable for the frequency and acuteness of its commercial depressions. From 1850 industrial expansion was for many years both greater and steadier than in any previous period.[1] It is no mere coincidence that

[1] Between 1850 and 1874 there was (except, perhaps, during the American Civil War) no falling off in the value of our export trade comparable to the serious declines of 1826, 1829, 1837, 1842, and 1848. We do not pretend to account for this difference, but may remind the reader of the coincident increase in the production of gold, the influence of Free Trade and railways, and, as the bimetallists would tell us, the currency arrangements which were brought to an end in 1873.

these years of prosperity saw the adoption by the Trade Union world of a "New Model" of organisation, under which Trade Unionism obtained a financial strength, a trained staff of salaried officers, and a permanence of membership hitherto unknown.

The predominance of Chartism over Trade Unionism was confined to the bad times of 1837–42. Under the influence of the rapid improvement and comparative prosperity which followed, the Chartist agitation dwindled away; and a marked revival in Trade Unionism took effect in the re-establishment, about 1843, of the Potters' Union, and of an active Cotton-spinners' Association, and in 1844 by the amalgamation of the metropolitan and provincial societies of compositors into the National Typographical Society. The powerful United Flint Glass Makers' Society (reorganised in 1849 as the Flint Glass Makers' Friendly Society of Great Britain and Ireland) dates from the same year. Delegate meetings of other trades were held; and national societies of tailors and shoemakers were set on foot. A national conference of curriers in 1845 established a federal union of all the local clubs in the trade. But the most important of the new bodies was the Miners' Association of Great Britain and Ireland, formed at Wakefield in 1841.[1] Up to this period the miners, held in virtual serfage by the truck system and the custom of yearly hirings, had not got beyond ephemeral strike organisations. Strong county Unions now grew up in Northumberland and Durham on the one hand, and Lancashire and Yorkshire on the other; and the new body was a federation of these. Under the leadership of Martin Jude, it developed an extraordinary propagandist activity, at one time paying no fewer than fifty-three missionary organisers, who visited every coal-pit in the kingdom. The delegate meetings of 1844

[1] *The Colliers' Guide, showing the Necessity of the Colliers Uniting to Protect their Labour from the Iron Hand of Oppression*, &c., by J. B. Thompson (Bishop Wearmouth, 1843); and see many reports in the *Northern Star*, from 1843 to 1848.

soon came to represent practically the whole of the mining districts of Great Britain; and the membership rose, it is said, to at least 100,000.[1]

A leading feature of this Trade Unionist revival was a dogged resistance to legal oppression. Although the more sensational prosecutions of Trade Union leaders had ceased with the abandonment of unlawful oaths, there was still going on, up and down the kingdom, an almost continuous persecution of the rank and file, by the magistrates' interpretation of the law relating to masters and servants. The miners, in particular, were hampered by lengthy hirings, during which they were compelled to serve if required, but were not guaranteed employment. Unskilled in legal subtleties, and not yet served by an experienced class of Trade Union secretaries, they were made the victims of a thousand and one quibbles and technicalities. The Northumberland and Durham Miners' Union grappled with the difficulty in a thoroughly practical spirit. They engaged W. P. Roberts,[2] an able and energetic solicitor, with strong labour sympathies, to fight every case in the local courts. In 1844 the Miners' Association of Great Britain and Ireland followed this

[1] *Northern Star* for 1843–4; Fynes' *Miners of Northumberland and Durham*, chap. viii.

[2] William Prowting Roberts, the youngest son of the Rev. Thomas Roberts, of Chelmsford, was born in 1806, and became a solicitor at Manchester. He was an enthusiastic Chartist, and friend of Fergus O'Connor, to whose Land Bank he acted as legal adviser. From 1843 onwards his name appears in nearly all the legal business of the Trade Unions. The collapse of 1848 somewhat damaged his reputation, but he continued to be frequently retained for many years. In 1867 he organised the defence of Allen, Larking, and O'Brien, the Irish "Manchester Martyrs," who were hanged for the rescue of Fenian prisoners and the murder of a policeman. In later years Roberts retired to a country house in the neighbourhood of "O'Connorville," near Rickmansworth, the scene of one of O'Connor's colonies, where he died on September 7, 1871. A pamphlet on the Trade Union Bill of 1871 (London, 1871) is the only publication of his that we have discovered, but he appears also to have edited a report of the engineers' trial in 1847, and of some other legal proceedings.

excellent example by appointing Roberts their standing legal adviser at a salary of £1,000 a year. The "miners' attorney-general," as he was called, showed an indefatigable activity in the defence of his clients, and was soon retained in all Trade Union cases. The magistrates throughout the country found themselves for the first time confronted by a pertinacious legal expert, who, far more ingenious than the employers, was not less unscrupulous in taking advantage of every technicality of the law.

In a letter written to the Flint Glass Makers' Friendly Society in 1851, Roberts himself gives a vivid picture of the difficulties against which the Unions had to contend. After explaining the law, as he understood it, he proceeds as follows: "But it is exceedingly difficult to induce those of the class opposed to you to take this view of things. I do not say this sarcastically, but as a fact learnt by long and observant experience. There are indeed men on the bench who are honest enough, and desirous of doing their duty. But all their tendencies and circumstances are against you. They listen to your opponents, not only often, but cheerfully—so they know more fully the case against you than in your favour. To you they listen too—but in a sort of temper of 'Prisoner at the Bar, you are entitled to make any statement you think fit, and the Court is bound to hear you; but mind, whatever you say,' &c. In the one case you observe the hearty smile of good-will; in the other the derisive sneer, though sometimes with a ghastly sort of kindliness in it. Then there is the knowledge of your overwhelming power when acting unitedly, and this begets naturally a corresponding desire to resist you at all hazards. And there are hundreds of other considerations all acting the same way—meetings, political councils, intermarriages, hopes from wills, &c. I do not say that all occupants of the bench are thus influenced, nor to the same extent; but it certainly is at the best an uphill game to contend in favour of a working man in a question which admits of any doubt against him. It never happened to me to meet a magis-

trate who considered that an agreement among masters not to employ any particular 'troublesome fellow' was an unlawful act; reverse the case, however, and it immediately becomes a formidable conspiracy, which must be put down by the strong arm of the law, &c. . . . When I was acting for the Colliers' Union in the North we resisted every individual act of oppression, even in cases where we were sure of losing; and the result was that in a short time there was no oppression to resist. For it is to be observed that oppression like that we are speaking of—which after all is merely a more genteel and cowardly mode of thieving—shrinks at once from a determined and decided opposition. In the North we should have tried this case, first in the County Court, then at the Assizes, and then perhaps in the Queen's Bench." [1]

One result of Roberts' successful advocacy is perhaps to be seen in the introduction, during the Parliamentary session of 1844, of a Bill "for enlarging the powers of

[1] *Flint Glass Makers' Magazine*, October, 1851. The years 1847–8 had witnessed many strikingly vindictive prosecutions of Trade Unionists. Besides the case of the engineers, to which we shall refer hereafter, twenty-one stonemasons of London were indicted in 1848 for conspiracy, but, after repeated postponements, the prosecuting employer failed to proceed with the case. The Sheffield razor-grinders stood in greater jeopardy. John Drury, and three other members of their society, were tried and sentenced to ten years' transportation at the instance of the Sheffield Manufacturers' Protection Association on the random accusations of two dissolute convicts that they had incited them to destroy machinery. This monstrous perversion of justice aroused the greatest indignation. Public meetings were held by the National Association of United Trades. The indictment was quashed on a technical point, but a new one was immediately preferred against the defendants. The local feeling was, however, so great that they were finally, after a year's suspense, released on their own recognisances (July 12, 1849). A Sheffield Trade Unionist declared that "the tyranny of the employers had been so great," in perverting the local administration of the law, "that the men laid their grievances before the Government. Sir George Grey ordered an inquiry. . . . Twenty cases of parties who had been convicted by the magistrates were brought before a Board of Inquiry, seventeen of which were quashed" (Stonemasons' *Fortnightly Circular*, November 23, 1848).

justices in determining complaints between masters, servants, and artificers."[1] Not only was any J.P. to be authorised to issue a warrant for the summary arrest of any workman complained of by his employer, but "any misbehaviour concerning such service or employment" was to be punished by two months' imprisonment, at the discretion of a single justice. It is easy to see what a wide interpretation would have been given by many a justice of the peace to this vague phrase; and Roberts was not slow to point out the danger to his clients. Upon his incitement the delegate meeting of coalminers at Sheffield set on foot a vigorous agitation against the Bill, which had already slipped through second reading and committee without a division. The Potters' Union took the matter up with special vigour, and circulated draft petitions throughout the Midlands.[2] A friendly member, Thomas Slingsby Duncombe, obstructed its further progress, and got it postponed until after the Easter recess. Meanwhile petitions poured in upon the astonished House, amounting, it was said, to a total of two hundred, and representing two millions of workmen. When the Bill came on again all the Radicals and the "Young England" Tories were marshalled against it. Sir James Graham in vain protested that the Government meant nothing more than a consolidation of the existing law, and led into the lobby all his colleagues who were present, including Mr. Gladstone. But the combination on the other side of Duncombe, Wakley, Hume, and Ferrand with Tories like Lord John Manners, and a few enlightened Whigs such as C. P. Villiers, settled the fate of this attempt on the part of the employers to sharpen the blunted weapon of the law against the hated Trade Unions.[3]

The miners were less successful in their strikes than in

[1] Bill No. 58 of 1844, introduced by William Miles, M.P. (Hansard, vols. 73 and 74.)

[2] *Potters' Examiner*, April 13, 1844.

[3] Hansard, vols. 73 and 74. The Bill was lost by 54 to 97 (May 1, 1844).

their legal and political business. In 1844 their National Conference at Glasgow, representing 70,000 men, voted, by 28,042 to 23,357, in favour of striking against their grievances, and the Northumberland and Durham men, numbering some 30,000, engaged in that prolonged struggle with Lord Londonderry and their other employers for more equitable terms of hiring and payment, to which we have already alluded.[1] After many months' embittered strife the strike failed disastrously; and the great Miners' Association, whose proceedings form so important a feature of the *Northern Star* for 1844 and 1845, gradually disappears from its pages, and by 1848, at any rate, had ceased to exist.

But the culminating point in this revival of Trade Union activity was the formation, at Easter, 1845, of the National Association of United Trades for the Protection of Labour, an organisation which resuscitated and combined some of the ideas both of Owen and of Doherty. This Association was explicitly based, as its rules inform us, "upon two great facts: first, that the industrious classes do not receive a fair day's wage for a fair day's labour; and, secondly, that for some years past their endeavours to obtain this have, with few exceptions, been unsuccessful. The main causes of this state of things are to be found in the isolation of the different sections of working men, and the absence of a generally recognised and admitted authority from the trades themselves." But, unlike the Owenite movement of 1833–4, the National Association of United Trades was from the first distinguished by the moderation of its aims and the prudence of its administration—qualities to which we may attribute its comparatively lengthy survival for fifteen years. No attempt was made to supersede existing organisations of particular trades by a "General Trades Union." "The peculiar local internal and technical circumstances of each trade," say the rules, "render it necessary that for all

[1] *The Miners of Northumberland and Durham*, by Richard Fynes, chap. ix.

purposes of efficient internal government its affairs should be administered by persons possessing a practical knowledge of them. For this reason it is not intended to interfere with the organisation of existing Trade Unions." Moreover, the promoters evidently intended the Association to become more of a Parliamentary Committee than a federation for trade purposes. Its purpose and duty was declared to be "to protect the interests and promote the well-being of the associated trades" by mediation, arbitration, and legal proceedings, and by promoting "all measures, political and social and educational, which are intended to improve the condition of the labouring classes." [1]

This new attempt to form a National Federation originated in a suggestion from the "United Trades" of Sheffield, embodied in an able letter written to Duncombe [2] by their secretary, John Drury. Duncombe had become widely known to the Trade Unionists, not only through his friendship with Fergus O'Connor, and his outspoken support of Chartism in the House of Commons, but also by his successful obstruction and defeat of the Masters and Servants Bill of the previous Session. He appears to have laid Drury's proposals before the leading men in the London Unions, who agreed to form a committee to report on the scheme,

[1] *Rules and Regulations of the Association of United Trades for the Protection of Industry* (London, August 2, 1845). There is, as far as we know, only one copy of these rules in existence, but full particulars of its establishment and working are to be found in the *Northern Star*, which it used for a time as its official organ.

[2] Thomas Slingsby Duncombe was the aristocratic demagogue of the period. An accomplished man of the world, with the habits of a dandy, he nevertheless devoted himself with remarkable assiduity not only to the Parliamentary business of the Chartists and Trade Unionists, but also to the dry details of the committee work of the association of which he became president. The *Life and Correspondence* of Duncombe, which his son published in 1868, describes him almost exclusively as a fashionable man of the world and House of Commons politician, and entirely ignores his more solid work for Trade Unionism during the years 1845–8.

and to summon a conference of Trade Union delegates from all parts of the country. At Easter, 1845, 110 delegates, representing not only the London trades, but also the Lancashire miners and textile operatives, the hosiery and woollen-workers of Yorkshire and the Midlands, and the "United Trades" of Manchester, Sheffield, Norwich, Hull, Bristol, Rochdale, and Yarmouth, met together in London.

The preliminary report made to the Conference by the London Committee of Trade Delegates is practically the first manifestation of that spirit of cautious if somewhat limited statesmanship which characterised the Trade Union leaders of the next thirty years.[1] The Committee, whilst recommending the immediate formation of a national organisation, "to vindicate the rights of labour," and "to oppose the tyranny of any legislative enactments to coerce trade societies, or of a similar character to the Masters and Servants Bill of last session, were deeply impressed with the importance of, and beneficial tendency arising from, a good understanding between the employer and the employed; seeing that their interests are mutual, and that neither can injure the other without the wrong perpetrated recoiling

[1] In this document we may perhaps trace the hand of T. J. Dunning, one of the ablest Trade Unionists of his time. Born in 1799, he became Secretary of the Consolidated Society of Bookbinders in 1843. In 1845 he joined the National Association of United Trades, but left that body after a few years. The *Bookbinders' Circular*, which he started in 1850, was, during the rest of his life, largely written by himself, and contains many well-reasoned articles on Trade Union matters. In 1858 Dunning joined the celebrated Committee of Inquiry into Trade Societies which was appointed by the Social Science Association. He contributed a history of his own society to the Report, and frequently took part in the subsequent annual congresses. His chief literary production is the essay entitled, *Trades Unions and Strikes; their philosophy ana intention* (London, 1860, 50 pp.), which he wrote for the prize instituted by his own Union for the best defence of the workmen's organisation. This essay, which no publisher would accept, and which was printed by his society, remains, perhaps, the best presentation of the Trade Union case which any working man has produced. He died in harness on the 23rd of December, 1873.

upon the party who inflicts it. They would therefore suggest it to be one of the principal objects of this Conference to cultivate a good understanding with the employer, and thereby remove those prejudices which exist against trade combinations, by showing upon all occasions that they only seek by combination to place themselves upon equal terms as disposers of their labour with those who purchase it; to secure themselves from injury, but by no means to inflict it upon others. Although the Committee are anxious that this desirable and important organisation should be carried out to the fullest possible extent, they feel that great caution must be observed in the formation of its laws and regulations, in order that the evils which existed and eventually destroyed, the Consolidated Union of 1833 shall be carefully avoided. The Committee conceive it necessary to call the attention of those trades who are comparatively disunited, and whose men are consequently working for different rates of wages, to the great necessity that exists, that those who are receiving the highest wages should use every effort within their power to secure to their fellow-workmen a fair remuneration for their labour; and that every inducement should be held out by the several trade societies to their separated brethren to join them, in order that they may be the better enabled to make common cause in cases of aggression, which would be the certain result if each trade were to form itself into one well-regulated society for their mutual interests. . . . And, finally, the Committee would earnestly recommend to this Conference, in order that these important points may be considered and dispassionately argued, that no proposition of a political nature, beyond what has been already alluded to, should be introduced, or occupy its attention; convinced as they are that the only way to carry out these desirable objects satisfactorily, and with a due consideration to the best interests of all those who are concerned, is to consider and dispose of but one question at a time: and, moreover, to keep trade matters and

politics as separate and distinct as circumstances will justify." [1]

The proceedings of this Conference show that the change of front on the part of the Trade Union leaders was reflected in the attitude of the rank and file. The surviving influence of Owenism is to be traced in the frequent recurrence of the idea of co-operative production, the desire to establish agricultural communities, and the proposal for a legislative shortening of the hours of labour. But of the aggressive policy and ambitious aims of 1830–34 scarcely a vestige remains. Strikes were deprecated, and the idea of a general cessation of work was entirely abandoned. The projects of co-operative production were on an altogether different plane from Owen's grand schemes. The Trade Unionists of the National Conference of 1845 had apparently no vision of a general transfer of the instruments of production from the capitalists to the Trade Unions; co-operative production was regarded simply as an auxiliary to Trade Union action, the union workshop furnishing a cheap alternative to unproductive strike pay. Besides thus formally abandoning the methods and pretensions of 1834, the Conference declared its allegiance to a new method of Trade Union activity—the policy of conciliation and arbitration. In the demand for "local Boards of Trade," a phrase borrowed apparently from the silkweavers, we see the beginning of that system of authoritative mutual negotiation between the representatives of capital and labour which has become the distinctive feature of British Trade Unionism in the last half of this century.

But the shadow of the failure of 1834 still hung over projects of universal Trades Unions. Although nearly all trades had been represented at the first conference, most of the larger organisations decided, on consideration, to hold aloof from the new body. We find, for instance,

[1] Report of London Committee of Trades Delegates to the National Conference of Trades Delegates, Easter, 1845; preserved in the archives of the Friendly Society of Operative Stonemasons.

the Manchester Lodge of the Stonemasons' Society promptly protesting against the adherence of the society's delegate, and expressing their emphatic opinion "that past experience has taught us that we have had general union enough." This view was endorsed by the Central Committee, which, in submitting the matter to the votes of the members, observes that "there are several trade societies in England as perfectly organised as ourselves, although their machinery may be somewhat various; but we can hear of none of these societies being desirous to join this national movement. . . . It may be very well for trades who are divided into sections and have no national organisation amongst themselves to join such an association—they have nothing to lose; but it is a question for serious reflection whether a general union of each trade separately would not be far more effective than the heterogeneous association in question."[1] A similar view seems to have been taken by the Coalminers, whose national federation was still in existence. A delegate meeting of the newly-formed National Typographical Association decided by a large majority to remain outside. The Lancashire Cotton-spinners sent a delegate to the adjourned conference, and even proposed to have perambulating lecturers to explain the advantages of the new organisation, but never actually decided to join.[2]

The adjourned conference on July 28, 1845, was therefore composed, in the main, of the delegates of the smaller or less organised trades. About fifty delegates took part in the proceedings, which extended over six days. It was eventually decided to separate the Trade Union from the co-operative aims, and to form two distinct but mutually helpful associations. The "National Association of United Trades for the Protection of Labour" undertook to deal with disputes between masters

[1] Stonemasons' *Fortnightly Circular*, May 14, 1846.

[2] Minutes of delegate meetings of the "Operative Cotton-spinners, Self-acting Minders, Twiners, and Rovers," held every other Sunday. See July 20, August 3, and December 14, 1845.

and men, and look after the interests of labour in the House of Commons. The "National United Trades Association for the Employment of Labour" proposed to raise capital with which to employ men who were on strike under circumstances approved by its twin brother. At the second conference, held at Manchester in June, 1846, when 126 delegates, representing, it was said, 40,000 members, were present, the contribution to the Trade Association was fixed at twopence in the pound of weekly earnings; and it was decided that the strike allowance should vary from nine shillings up to fourteen shillings per week, the latter sum being the wages agreed on for men employed in the association's own workshops. Up to this date no strike had been supported, as it was desired to avoid the premature action which had, it was held, destroyed the Grand National Consolidated Union. A number of paid organisers were engaged. The Association, which hitherto had consisted of woollen and hosiery-workers and of the Midland hardware trades, spread in various new directions. The executive of the Friendly Society of Operative Carpenters and Joiners—the association that had played so important a part in the movement of 1830—issued a manifesto to its members in favour of joining, and the general secretary became an active member of the Executive of the National Association. The Manchester Section of the National Cordwainers' Society urged all its members and all societies of boot and shoemakers to join. The Potters of Staffordshire, the Miners of Scotland, the new-born National Association of Tailors, as well as the Metropolitan branches of the Boilermakers and Masons' Societies came in. The association, in fact, became reputed a power in the land, and drew down upon itself the abusive censure of the *Times*.[1] But in spite of the wise intentions of its founders, it soon began to suffer from the characteristic complaints of general unions. The depression of trade which began in 1845 brought about during the next

[1] *Times*, November 16, 1846.

two years reductions of wages, followed by strikes and turn-outs in almost every branch of industry. The local committees of the National Association, frequently composed of the officials of the trades concerned, promised their members the support of the national funds, and took umbrage when the Executive sitting in London reversed their decisions. Each constituent trade felt that its interests were misunderstood, or its grievances neglected. A prolonged strike of the Manchester building trades in 1846, begun without sanction, failed miserably, the local committee of the National Association declaring that the collapse was due to lack of the financial support which had been promised on behalf of the central body. The coal and iron miners at Holytown in Lanarkshire engaged in a struggle against their employers which excited the sympathy of the Trade Union world, but which ended in failure. An equally severe conflict by the calico-printers at Crayford in Kent met with no better success. The Scottish miners complained that they had been inadequately supported by the association; and the Lancashire miners made this the pretext for continued abstention.

Though Duncombe's association had discouraged strikes, and acted principally as a mediating body, the employers throughout the country showed themselves uniformly hostile. The "document" which had figured so prominently in 1833–4 reappeared in a slightly altered form. The employers signified their toleration if not their approval of local trade clubs, but condemned with equal acrimony national unions of particular trades, or general unions of all trades. Affecting a sudden concern for the independence of character of their workmen, they insisted that the existence of any kind of central committee, however representative it might be, prevented the men from being free agents, and exposed them to the arbitrary commands of an irresponsible body. In face of this attitude, the efforts of the National Association to bring about peaceful settlements met with only qualified success.

The London Executive, unable to cope with the applications for assistance that poured in daily from all parts of the country, issued strong admonitions against unauthorised strikes, but had eventually to give or withhold support without sufficient knowledge of the local circumstances. Duncombe was principally occupied in drawing up and presenting petitions in favour of the legislative shortening of the hours of labour, and in this direction he rendered valuable assistance to the Lancashire cotton-spinners' "Short Time Committee," which secured the Ten Hours Act of 1847. The Central Executive was, indeed, during these years, more a Parliamentary Committee for the whole movement than a federation of Trade Unions. The plan of co-operative workshops, from which so much had been expected, proved entirely futile in the prolonged contests of the staple trades. One flourishing boot workshop was started; and the 1847 conference found, in all, one hundred and twenty-three men at work, the enterprises being confined to those trades carried on by hand labour in a small way. In 1848 it was decided to merge the two associations in one, and to set about raising £50,000 in order to start on a larger scale. But before this could be attempted the association suffered a double reverse from which it never recovered. Duncombe was compelled, by failing health, to withdraw during 1848 from active participation in its work. And at the end of the following year a strike of the Wolverhampton tinplate-workers involved the National Association in a struggle with employers and with the law which drained its funds and destroyed its credit.[1]

[1] The tinplate-workers of Wolverhampton had been endeavouring, ever since they joined the Association in 1845, to obtain a uniform list of piecework rates. By the influence of the National Association, such a list was agreed to during 1849 by all the employers except two. One of these treated the men with exceptional duplicity. Having, as he thought, adequately prepared himself, he threw off the mask in July, 1850, and flatly refused to continue the negotiations. The fierce industrial and legal conflict which ensued attracted general attention. Many of the strikers were imprisoned for breach of con-

The later history of the association is obscure.[1] It lingered on for many years in a small way, its paid officers serving as advisers and representatives to a number of minor Trade Unions. Its principal work in later years was the promotion and support of bills for the establishment of councils of conciliation, and its persistent efforts certainly paved the way for the Joint Boards subsequently set on foot. But it ceases after 1851 to exercise any influence or play any important part in the Trade Union Movement.

The National Association of United Trades stands, in constitution and objects, half-way between the revolutionary voluntaryism of 1830–4 and the Parliamentary action of 1863–75. It may, in fact, be regarded either as a belated "General Trades Union" of an improved type, or as a premature and imperfect Parliamentary Committee of the Trade Union world. And although the great national Unions of the time took no part in its proceedings, its moderate and unaggressive policy was

tract; and the struggle culminated in the prosecution of three members of the committee of the National Association, together with several of the local Unionists, for conspiracy to molest and intimidate the employer by inducing men to leave his employment. Owing to legal quibbles, raised first on behalf of the Crown, and then on behalf of the defendants, the case was tried no fewer than three times, the final judgment not being delivered until November, 1851, when five of the prisoners were sentenced to three months', and one to one month's imprisonment. See R. *v.* Rowlands, 5 Cox C. C. p. 436; also Appendix A to *The Law relating to Trade Unions*, by Sir William Erle (London, 1869).

[1] Duncombe formally resigned the presidency in 1852. In 1856 its secretary, Thomas Winters, gave evidence in favour of conciliation before the Select Committee on Masters and Operatives (Equitable Councils, &c.). He stated that the membership then numbered between 5,000 and 6,000, and that the central committee consisted of three salaried members, who gave up their whole time to the work. A subsequent secretary (E. Humphries) appeared before a similar committee four years later, his evidence showing that the association, though it was still in existence, had taken no part in any of the important labour struggles of the past seven or eight years. Mr. George Howell incidentally puts the date of its dissolution at 1860.

only one manifestation of the new spirit which now prevailed in Trade Union councils. We see rising up in the Unions of the better-paid artisans a keen desire to get at the facts of their industrial and social condition. This new feeling for exact knowledge may to some extent be attributed to the increasing share which the printing trades were now beginning to take in the Trade Union Movement. The student of the reports of the larger compositors' societies, from the very beginning of the century, will be struck, not only by the moderation, but also by the elaborate Parliamentary formality—one might almost say the stateliness of their proceedings. Instead of rhetorical abuse of all employers as "the unproductive classes," and total abstinence from investigation of the details of disputes, we find the compositors dealing only with concrete instances of hardship, and referring every important question to a "Select Committee" for inquiry and report. In 1848 the London Consolidated Society of Bookbinders, established in 1786, used part of its funds to form a library for the benefit of its members. By 1851 a reading-room furnished with daily and weekly newspapers had been opened. Four years later a similar library was established by the London Society of Compositors. In 1842 the Journeymen Steam-Engine and Machine Makers' Friendly Society started a Mutual Improvement Class at Manchester. Even the Stonemasons, at that time a rough and somewhat turbulent body, were reached by the new desire for self-improvement. The Glasgow branch of the Scottish United Operative Masons report with pride, in 1845, that they have "formed a class for mutual instruction . . . an association for moral, physical, and intellectual improvement" which was setting itself to investigate the question —"Is the present improved condition of machinery beneficial to the working classes, or is it hurtful?"[1] But the most effective outcome of this desire for information was the starting by the Unions of special trade journals. The

[1] English Stonemasons' *Fortnightly Circular*, December 25, 1845.

United Branches of the Operative Potters set on foot in 1843 the *Potters' Examiner*, a weekly newspaper which dealt with the trade interests and technical processes of their industry.[1] The Journeymen Steam-Engine and Machine Makers' Friendly Society issued the *Mechanics' Magazine* between 1841 and 1847. In November, 1850, Dunning persuaded the London Consolidated Society of Bookbinders to publish the *Bookbinders' Trade Circular*, in the pages of which he promulgated a theory of Trade Unionism, from which McCulloch himself would scarcely have dissented,[2] and made that humble organ of his society into a monthly magazine of useful information on all matters connected with books and their manufacture. But the best of these trade publications, and the only one which has enjoyed a continuous existence down to the present day, was the *Flint Glass Makers' Magazine*, an octavo monthly of ninety-six pages, established at Birmingham in 1850 by the Flint Glass Makers' Friendly Society,[3] which advocated "the education of every man in our trade, beginning at the oldest and coming down to the youngest. . . . If you do not wish to stand as you are and suffer more oppression," it enjoined its readers, "we say to you get knowledge,

[1] The *Potters' Examiner*, started December, 1843, was converted, in July, 1848, into the *Potters' Examiner and Emigrants' Advocate*, published at Liverpool and concerned chiefly with emigration. It ceased to appear soon after 1851.

[2] See especially the articles on "Wages of Labour and Trade Societies." in the second, third, and fourth numbers (December, 1850, to February, 1851), in which he assumes that the general level of wages is irresistibly determined by Supply and Demand, but that Trade Unionism, in providing out-of-work pay, enables the individual workman to resist exceptional tyranny or exaction.

[3] This journal contains a mass of useful information relating to the trade, special reports of the Trade Union Congresses, and well-written articles on industrial and economic problems. It is marked throughout by moderation of tone and fairness of argument. Unfortunately, so far as we know, it is not preserved in any public library, and we are indebted to Mr. Haddleton, Secretary to the Birmingham Trades Council, who possesses a complete set, for our acquaintance with its contents.

and in getting knowledge you get power. . . . Let us earnestly advise you to educate; get intelligence instead of alcohol—it is sweeter and more lasting." [1]

With increased acquaintance with industrial conditions came a reaction against the policy of reckless aggression which marked the Owenite inflation. Here again we find the printing trades taking the lead. Already in 1835, when the London Compositors were re-organising their society, the committee went out of their way to denounce the great general Unions. "Unfortunately almost all Trades Unions hitherto formed," they report to their members, "have relied for success upon extorted oaths and physical force. . . . The fault and the destruction of all Trades Unions has hitherto been that they have copied the vices which they professed to condemn. While disunited and powerless they have stigmatised their employers as grasping taskmasters; but as soon as they (the workmen) were united and powerful, then they became tyrants in their turn, and unreasonably endeavoured to exact more than the nature of their employment demanded, or than their employers could afford to give. Hence their failure was inevitable. . . . Let the Compositors of London show the Artisans of England a brighter and better example; and casting away the aid to be derived from cunning and brute strength, let us, when we contend with our opponents, employ only the irresistible weapons of truth and reason." [2] The disasters of 1837–42 caused this spirit to spread to other trades. From this time forth the minutes and circulars of the larger Unions abound in impressive warnings against aggressive action. "Strikes are prolific," say the delegates of the Ironmoulders in council assembled; "in certain cases they beget others. . . . How often have disputes been averted by a few timely words with employers! It

[1] Opening Address to the Glass Makers of England, Ireland, and Scotland, No. 1.

[2] Report of London Compositors' Committee on Amalgamation, 1834; Annual Report, February 2, 1835.

is surely no dishonour to explain to your employer the nature and extent of your grievance."[1] The Stonemasons' Central Committee repeatedly caution their members "against the dangerous practice of striking. . . . Keep from it," they urge, "as you would from a ferocious animal that you know would destroy you. . . . Remember what it was that made us so insignificant in 1842. . . . We implore you, brethren, as you value your own existence, to avoid, in every way possible, those useless strikes. Let us have another year of earnest and attentive organisation; and, if that does not perfect us, we must have another; for it is a knowledge of the disorganised state of working men generally that stimulates the tyrant and the taskmaster to oppress them."[2] A few years later the Liverpool lodge invites the support of all the members for the proposition "that our society no longer recognise strikes, either as a means to be adopted for improving our condition, or as a scheme to be resorted to in resisting infringements,"[3] and suggests, as an alternative, the formation of an Emigration Fund. The Portsmouth lodge caps this proposal by insisting, not only that strikes should cease, but also that the word "strike" be abolished! The *Flint Glass Makers' Magazine*, between 1850 and 1855, is full of similar denunciations. "We believe," writes the editor, "that strikes have been the bane of Trades Unions."[4] In 1854 the Flint Glass Makers, on the proposition of the Central Committee, abolished the allowance of "strike-money" by a vote of the whole of the members. As an alternative it was often suggested that a bad employer should be defeated by quietly withdrawing the men one by one, as situations could be found for them elsewhere. "As man after man leaves, and no one [comes] to supply their

[1] *Address of Delegate Meeting to the Members of the Friendly Society of Ironmoulders of England, Ireland, and Wales*, September 26, 1846.

[2] *Fortnightly Circular*, December 25, 1845.

[3] Ibid., June, 1849.

[4] January, 1855.

place, then it is that the proud and haughty spirit of the oppressor is brought down, and he feels the power he cannot see." [1]

It was part of the same policy of restricting the use of the weapon of the strike that the power of declaring war on the employers was, during these years, taken away from the local branches. In the two great societies of which we have complete records—the Ironmoulders and the Stonemasons—we see a gradual tightening up of the control of the central executive. The Delegate Meeting of the Ironmoulders in 1846 vested the entire authority in the Executive Committee. "The system," they report, "of allowing disputes to be sanctioned by meetings of our members, generally labouring under some excitement or other, or misled by a plausible letter from the scene of the dispute, is decidedly bad. Our members do not feel that responsibility on these occasions which they ought. They are liable to be misled. A clever speech, party feeling, a misrepresentation, or a specious letter—all or any of these may involve a shop, or a whole branch, in a dispute, unjustly and possibly without the least chance of obtaining their object. . . . Impressed with the truth of these opinions, we have handed over for the future the power of sanctioning disputes to the Executive Committee alone." [2] The Stonemasons' Central Committee, after 1843, peremptorily forbid lodges to strike shops, even if they do not mean to charge the society's funds with strike-pay. And though in this Union, unlike the Ironmoulders, the decision to strike or not to strike was not vested in the Executive, any lodge had to submit its demand, through the *Fortnightly Circular*, to the vote of the whole body of members throughout the kingdom—a procedure which

[1] Letter on "The Evil Consequences of Strikes," in *Flint Glass Makers' Magazine*, July, 1850.

[2] *Address of the Delegate Meeting to the Members of the Friendly Society of Ironmoulders*, 1846.

involved delay and gave the Central Committee an opportunity of using its influence in favour of peace.

The fact that most of the Executive Committees were, from 1845 onward, setting their face against strikes, did not imply the abandonment of an energetic trade policy. The leaders of the better educated trades had accepted the economic axiom that wages must inevitably depend upon the relation of Supply and Demand in each particular class of labour. It seemed an obvious inference that the only means in their power to maintain or improve their condition was to diminish the supply. "All men of experience agree," affirms the Delegate Meeting of the Ironmoulders in 1847, "that wages are to be best raised by the demand for labour." Hence we find the denunciations of strikes accompanied by an insistence on the limitation of apprentices, the abolition of overtime, and the provision of an Emigration Fund. The Flint Glass Makers declare that "the scarcity of labour was one of the fundamental principles laid down at our first conference held in Manchester in 1849." "It is simply a question of supply and demand, and we all know that if we supply a greater quantity of an article than what is actually demanded that the cheapening of that article, whether it be labour or any other commodity, is a natural result."[1] In this application of the doctrine of Supply and Demand the Flint Glass Makers were joined by the Compositors, Bookbinders, Ironmoulders, Potters, and, as we shall presently see, the Engineers.[2]

[1] "Emigration as a Means to an End," *Flint Glass Makers' Magazine*, August, 1854; address of Executive, September, 1857.

[2] "Thus if in a depression you have fifty men out of work they will receive £1,015 in a year, and at the same time be used as a whip by the employers to bring your wages down; by sending them to Australia at £20 per head you save £15, and send them to plenty instead of starvation at home; you keep your own wages good by the simple act of clearing the surplus labour out of the market." (Farewell Address of the Secretary, *Flint Glass Makers' Magazine*, August, 1854.) "Remove the surplus labour and oppression itself will soon be a thing of the past" (*Ibid.*).

For the next ten years an Emigration Fund becomes a constant feature of many of the large societies, to be abandoned only when it was discovered that the few thousands of pounds which could be afforded for this purpose produced no visible effect in diminishing the surplus labour. Moreover, it was the vigorous and energetic member who applied for his passage-money, whilst the chronically unemployed, if he could be persuaded to go at all, invariably reappeared at the club-house after a brief trip at the society's expense.[1]

The harmless but ineffective expedient of emigration was accompanied by the more equivocal plan of closing the trade to new-comers. The Flint Glass Makers, like the other sections of the glass trade, have always been notorious for their strict limitation of the number of apprentices. The constant refrain of their trade organ is "Look to the rule and keep boys back; for this is the foundation of the evil, the secret of our progress, the dial on which our society works, and the hope of future generations."[2] The printing trades were equally active. Select Committees of the London Society of Compositors were constantly inquiring into the most effective way of checking boy-labour and regulating "turnover"

[1] Emigration Funds begin to appear in Trade Union reports about 1843 (see the *Potters' Examiner*). For thirty years the accounts of the larger societies include, off and on, considerable appropriations for the emigration of members. The tabular statement of expenditure published in the Ironmoulders' Annual Report shows, for instance, that £4,712 was spent in this way between 1855 and 1874. In the Amalgamated Carpenters an Emigration Benefit lingered until 1886, when it was finally abolished by the General Council; the members resident in the United States and Colonies strongly objecting to this use of the funds. But it was between 1850 and 1860 that emigration found most favour as an integral part of Trade Union policy. The Trade Unions of the United States and the Australian Colonies addressed vigorous protests to the officials of the English societies (see, for example, the Stonemasons' *Fortnightly Circular*, June, 1856), a fact which co-operated with the dying away of the "gold rush," and the change of Trade Union opinion, to cause the abandonment of the policy.

[2] *Flint Glass Makers' Magazine*, September, 1857.

apprentices. And the engineering trades, at this time entering the Trade Union world, were basing their whole policy on the assumption that the duly apprenticed mechanic, like the doctor or the solicitor, had a right to exclude "illegal men" from his occupation.

Such was the "New Spirit" which, by 1850, was dominating the Trade Union world. Meanwhile the steady growth of national Unions, each with three to five thousand members, ever-increasing friendly benefits, and a weekly contribution per member which sometimes exceeded a shilling, involved a considerable development of Trade Union structure. The little clubs and local societies had been managed, in the main, by men working at their trades, and attending to their secretarial duties in the evening. With the growth of such national organisations as the Stonemasons, the Ironmoulders, and the Steam-Engine Makers, the mere volume of business necessitated the appointment of one of the members to devote his whole time to the correspondence and accounts. But the new official, however industrious and well-meaning, found upon his hands a task for which neither his education nor his temperament had fitted him. The archives of these societies reveal the pathetic struggles of inexperienced workmen to cope with the difficulties presented by the combination of branch management and centralised finance. The disbursement of friendly benefits by branch meetings, the custody and remittance of the funds, the charges for local expenses (including "committee liquor"),[1]

[1] During these years the Executive Committees of the larger societies were waging war on the "liquor allowance." In the reports and financial statements of the Unions for the first half of the century, drink was one of the largest items of expenditure, express provision being made by the rules for the refreshment of the officers and members at all meetings. The rules of the London Society of Woolstaplers (1813) state that "the President shall be accommodated with his own choice of liquors, wine only excepted." The Friendly Society of Ironmoulders (1809) ordains that the Marshall shall distribute the beer round the meeting impartially, members being forbidden to drink out of turn "except the officers at the table or a member on his first coming to the town." Even as

the mysteries of bookkeeping, and the intricacies of audit all demanded a new body of officers specially selected for and exclusively engaged in this work. During these years we watch a shifting of leadership in the Trade Union world from the casual enthusiast and irresponsible agitator to a class of permanent salaried officers expressly chosen from out of the rank and file of Trade Unionists for their superior business capacity. But besides the daily work of administration, the expansion of local societies into organisations of national extent, and the transformation of loose federations into consolidated unions, involved the difficult process of constitution-making. The records of the Ironmoulders and the Stonemasons show with what anxious solicitude successive Delegate Meetings were groping after a set of rules that would work smoothly and efficiently. One Union, however, the Journeymen Steam-Engine and Machine Makers and Millwrights' Friendly Society, tackled the problems of internal organisation with peculiar ability, and eventually

late as 1837 the rules of the Steam-Engine Makers' Society direct one-third of the weekly contribution to be spent in the refreshment of the members, a provision which drops out in the revision of 1846. In that year the Delegate Meeting of the Ironmoulders prohibited drinking and smoking at its own sittings, and followed up this self-denying ordinance by altering the rules of the society so as to change the allowance of beer at branch meetings to its equivalent in money. "We believe," they remark in their address to the members, "the business of the society would be much better done were there no liquor allowance. Interruption, confusion, and scenes of violence and disorder are often the characteristics of meetings where order, calmness, and impartiality should prevail." By 1860 most of the larger societies had abolished all allowance for liquor, and some had even prohibited its consumption during business meetings. It is to be remembered that the Unions had, at first, no other meeting place than the club-room freely placed at their disposal by the publican, and that their payment for drink was of the nature of rent. Meanwhile the Compositors and Bookbinders were removing their headquarters from public-houses to offices of their own, and the Steam-Engine Makers were allowing branches to hire rooms for meetings so as to avoid temptation. In 1850 the Ironmoulders report that some publicans were refusing to lend rooms for meetings, owing to the growth of Temperance.

produced, in the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, a "New Model" of the utmost importance to Trade Union history.

To understand the rise of this remarkable society, we must revert to the earlier history of combinations, which have hitherto scarcely claimed attention in our account of the general movement. The origin of Trade Unionism in the engineering trades is obscure. We learn that at the close of the last century the then dominant class of millwrights possessed strong, exclusive, and even tyrannical trade societies.[1] The millwrights, who were originally constructors of mill-work of every kind, both wood and iron, were, on the introduction of the steam-engine, gradually superseded by specialised workers in particular sections of their trade. The introduction of what was termed "the engineer's economy," that is to say. the parcelling out of the trade of the millwright among distinct classes of workmen, and the substitution of "payment according to merit" for the millwrights' Standard Rate, completely disorganised the skilled mechanics of the engineering trade. This condition was not materially improved by the establishment, from 1822 onward, of numerous competing Trade Friendly Societies. The Ironmoulders alone concentrated their efforts upon maintaining one national society. The millwrights, smiths, pattern-makers, and other skilled mechanics engaged in engine and machine making had societies in London, Manchester, Newcastle, Bradford, Derby, and other engineering centres. Of these the Steam-Engine Makers (established 1824); the Journeymen Steam-Engine and Machine Makers and Millwrights (estab-

[1] See the evidence given by Galloway and other employers before the 1824 Select Committee on Artisans and Machinery; also incidental references in the *Life of Sir William Fairbairn* (London, 1877) and other works. We have been unable to discover any documents of engineering societies prior to 1822. Sir William Fairbairn, in the preface to his *Mills and Mill-work* (London, 1861), attributes the supersession of the millwright to the changes consequent on the introduction of the steam-engine.

lished 1826); the Associated Fraternity of Iron Forgers, usually called the "Old Smiths" (established 1830); and the Boilermakers (established 1832) are known to have been organisations of national extent, with branches in all parts of the country, competing, not only with each other, but with the Metropolitan and other local societies of Millwrights, Smiths, Pattern-makers, and General Engineers. This anarchic rivalry prevented any effectual trade action, and tempted employers to give the work to the lowest bidder, and to introduce the worst features of competitive piecework and sub-contract.

We are, therefore, not surprised to find that the engineers' societies took little part in the great upheaval of 1830–4. But the wave of solidarity which then swept over the labour world seems to have had considerable, though tardy, effect even in this trade. The chief districts affected were London and Lancashire. In 1836 a London joint committee of several of the sectional societies successfully conducted an eight months' strike for a shortening of the hours of labour to sixty per week, and for extra payment for overtime. Again, in 1844 a joint committee obtained from the London employers a further reduction of hours. Encouraged by these successes, the members of the Metropolitan societies and branches began to discuss the possibility of a national amalgamation. The most prominent personality in this movement was that of William Newton,[1] a leading

[1] William Newton was born at Congleton in 1822, his father, who had once occupied a superior position, being then a journeyman machinist. The boy went to work in engine shops at the age of fourteen, and came to London in 1840 (where he worked in the same shop as Sir Henry James, then an engineer pupil), and eventually rose to be foreman. After his dismissal he took a public-house at Ratcliffe, and devoted himself largely to the promotion of the amalgamation of the engineering societies. In 1852 he became, for a short period, secretary to a small insurance company. At the General Election of 1852 he became a candidate for the Tower Hamlets. He was opposed by both the great political parties, but the show of hands at the hustings was in his favour. At the poll he was unsuccessful, receiving, however, 1,095 votes. In later years he became the pro-

member of the Journeymen Steam-Engine and Machine Makers and Millwrights' Friendly Society, the association which afterwards became, as we shall see, the parent of the amalgamation.

William Newton had exactly the qualities needed for his task. Gifted with remarkable eloquence, astute and conciliatory in his methods, he was equally successful in inspiring masses of men with a large idea, and in persuading the representatives and officials of rival societies to agree with the details of his scheme. His influence was augmented by his tried devotion to the cause of Trade Unionism. In 1848 he was dismissed from a first-rate position as foreman in a large establishment owing to his activity in trade matters, and in the following years his business as a publican was seriously damaged by his constant absence on society business. But though from the first he had been an active member of his Union, he was, so far as we know, at no time its salaried official. He stands, therefore, midway between the casual and amateur leaders of the old Trade Unionism and the new class of permanent officials, sticking closely to office work, and acquiring a detailed experience in Trade Union organisation.

Whilst Newton was bringing the London societies into line, the Lancashire engineers were moving in the same direction. Already in 1839 a "committee of the engineering trades" at Bolton urged upon their comrades the establishment of "one concentrated union;" and in the following year, through the energy of Alexander Hutchinson, the secretary of the Friendly United Smiths

prietor of a prosperous local newspaper and was elected by the Mile End Vestry as its representative on the Metropolitan Board of Works. He became one of the leading members of that body, on which he served from 1862 to 1876, filling the important office of deputy chairman to the Parliamentary, Fire Brigade, and other influential committees. In 1868 he again contested the Tower Hamlets against both Liberals and Conservatives, receiving 2,890 votes; and in 1875 he unsuccessfully fought a bye-election at Ipswich. He died March 9, 1876.

of Great Britain and Ireland, a United Trades Association was set on foot in Lancashire, to comprise the "Five Trades of Mechanism, viz., Mechanics, Smiths, Moulders, Engineers, and Millwrights." The objects of this association were ably represented and promoted by its organ, the *Trades Journal*, established to extend and "improve Trades Unions generally in Great Britain and Ireland."[1] The attempt proved, however, premature, and it was not until the year 1844 that the Bolton men succeeded in establishing a permanent "Protection Society," composed of delegates from the Societies of Smiths, Millwrights, Ironmoulders, Engineers, and Boilermakers. Inspirited by the success of the Bolton society in resisting various encroachments by the employers, joint committees of engineering operatives were formed between 1844 and 1850 in all the principal Lancashire centres, and the ground was prepared for a systematic attempt at national amalgamation.

The leading part in the amalgamation was taken by the society to which Newton belonged. The Journeymen Steam-Engine and Machine Makers and Millwrights' Friendly Society, with its headquarters at Manchester, at this time far exceeded any other trade society in membership and wealth. Established in 1826 as the Friendly Union of Mechanics, it had absorbed in 1837 a strong Yorkshire society dating from 1822, and by 1848 it numbered seven thousand members organised in branches all over the kingdom, and possessed an accumulated reserve fund of £27,000. The silent growth of this Union, the slow perfecting of its constitution by repeated delegate meetings held at intervals during the preceding twenty years, stand in marked contrast with the dramatic advent of the ephemeral organisations of 1830–34. But this task of internal organisation, with its

[1] This journal is preserved in the Manchester Public Library (341, P. 37). It was a well-written 16 pp. 8vo., issued, at first fortnightly and afterwards monthly, at 2d. No. 1 is dated July 4, 1840.

gradual working out of the elaborate financial and administrative system which afterwards became celebrated in the constitution of the Amalgamated Engineers, seems to have absorbed, during the first fifteen years of its existence, all the energy of its members. In none of the working-class movements of this period did the society play any part, nor do we find that it engaged in any important conflicts with its members' employers. At last, in 1843, a delegate meeting urged the members to oppose systematic overtime, and in 1844 the society, as we have seen, took part in the London movement for the shortening of the hours of labour. By 1845 it seems to have felt itself strong enough to undertake aggressive trade action, and a delegate meeting in that year attacked the employment of labourers on machines, "the piece master system," and systematic overtime, by stringent resolutions upon which the Executive Committee sitting at Manchester were directed to take early action.[1] During the following year accordingly a simultaneous attempt appears to have been made by many of the branches to enforce these rules. This action led, at Belfast, Rochdale, and Newton-le-Willows, to legal proceedings by the employers, and the officers of the society, together with over a score of its members, found themselves in the dock indicted for conspiracy and illegal combination.[2] The trial of the

[1] Minutes of delegate meeting at Manchester, May 12, 1845. An admirable account of this society, founded on documents no longer extant, is given in an article by Professor Brentano in the *North British Review*, October, 1870, entitled, "The Growth of a Trades Union."

[2] Executive Circular, 1846, cited in proceedings in *R.* v. *Selsby*. Two full accounts of the trial were published, viz., a *Verbatim Report of the Trial for Conspiracy in R.* v. *Selsby and others* (Liverpool, 1847, 66 pp.), published under the "authority of the Executive of the Steam-Engine Makers' Society," and a *Narrative, &c., of the Trial, R.* v. *Selsby* (London, 1847, 68 pp.). Both are preserved in the Manchester Public Library, P. 2198. The legal report is in Cox's *Crown Cases*, vol. v. p. 496, &c. Contemporary Trade Union reports contain many references to the proceedings. It was noticed as an instance of the animus of the prosecution that the indictment

twenty-six engineers of Newton-le-Willows, and the conviction of nine of them, including Selsby, the General Secretary of the great mechanics' Union, caused a sensation in the Trade Union world, and tended to draw closer together the rival societies in the engineering trade.

The progressive trade policy of the Journeymen Steam-Engine and Machine Makers' Society greatly increased the ascendency which its superiority in wealth and numbers gave it over the numerous other trade friendly societies in the engineering trades. William Allan, a young Scotchman, succeeded Selsby in the salaried post of general secretary. A close friend and ardent disciple of William Newton, he quickly manifested, in the administration of his own society, the capacity and energy which enabled him in future years to play so important a part in the general history of the Labour Movement. The cause of amalgamation was well served by the indefatigable missionary efforts of these two men. The anniversary dinners and friendly social meetings of the joint committees of the societies in the Lancashire iron trades were, as we know from contemporary records, made the occasion of propagandist speeches, and were doubtless used also by these astute organisers to talk over the leading men to agreement with their proposals. The natural jealousy felt by the great provincial centre of Trade Unionism of the interference of the Metropolis in its concerns was allayed by Allan's suggestion that the Lancashire societies should call a conference of delegates at Warrington in March, 1850, for the purpose of consultation and discussion only. At this meeting, which was attended by the representatives of three or four of the larger societies, Newton and Allan succeeded in getting through the outlines of their scheme of amalgamation. During the next six months these proposals were the subject of

contained 4,914 counts, and measured fifty-seven yards in length. W. P. Roberts organised the defence, which cost the Union £1,800. The firm in whose works the dispute arose became bankrupt within a few years.

exhaustive discussion at every joint committee and branch meeting. Meanwhile the leaders had established in Manchester a weekly journal for the express purpose of promoting amalgamation, engaging as editor, under a written contract, Dr. John Watts, afterwards well known as one of the ablest advocates of co-operation. This journal, the *Trades Advocate and Herald of Progress*, stated to be "established by the Iron Trades," discussed the advantages of union, and incidentally taught the doctrines of Free Trade and Co-operative Production.[1]

Lancashire converted and conciliated, London could now go ahead. Under Newton's influence the London joint committee summoned a second delegate meeting at Birmingham in September, 1850, which was attended by representatives of seven engineering societies. At this conference the scheme of amalgamation was definitely adopted; and the Metropolitan "Central Committee" was charged, as a "Provisional Committee," to complete the details of the transfer of the old organisation to the new body. The tact and skill with which Allan and Newton carried out their project are conspicuously shown by the way in which the act of union was regarded by all concerned. There is no trace of suspicion on the part of the minor societies that they were taking part in anything but an amalgamation on equal terms. The whole Trade Union world, including the Amalgamated Society of Engineers itself, has retained the tradition that this great organisation was the outcome of a genuine amalgamation of societies of fairly equivalent standing. What happened, as a matter of fact, was that the society led by Allan and Newton absorbed its rivals.[2] The new body took over,

[1] *The Trades Advocate and Herald of Progress* was an 8 pp. quarto weekly, price 1d., No. 1 being dated June, 1850. The volume from June to December, 1850, is preserved in the Manchester Public Library (401 E, 18). An able article by Mr. John Burnett in the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle*, July 3, 1875, gives a vivid picture of the struggle for amalgamation.

[2] This was pointed out in Professor Brentano's article in the *North British Review*, already quoted.

in its entirety, the elaborate constitution, the scheme of benefits, the trade policy, and even the official staff of the Journeymen Steam-Engine and Machine Makers and Millwrights' Society, which contributed more than three-fourths of the membership with which the amalgamation started, and found itself continued, down to the minutest details, in the rules and regulations of the new association.

The conclusions of the Birmingham delegates were not accepted without demur. Many of the branches in Lancashire and elsewhere objected to the position obtained by the London Committee, and stood aloof from the amalgamation. The Manchester Committee showed signs of jealousy at the transfer of the seat of government to the Metropolis. But the most important defection was that of the rank and file of the members of the Steam-Engine Makers' Society, an association which stood in membership and funds second only to the Journeymen Steam-Engine Makers and Machine Makers' Society. Newton and Allan had succeeded in persuading the whole of the Executive to throw in their lot with the amalgamation, but the bulk of the members revolted, and the society has to this day maintained a separate existence. Even in Newton's own society, in which the main principles of the amalgamation had been carried by large majorities, a considerable number of the provincial branches remained hostile. On January 6, 1851, when the Provisional Committee formally assumed office as the Executive Committee of the United Society, scarcely 5,000 members out of the 10,500 represented at the Birmingham Conference were paying to the amalgamated funds.[1] For some months, indeed, the success of Newton's ambitious scheme looked doubtful. Though London

[1] The organ of the Executive Council was the *Operative*, a well-written weekly journal, which was set on foot by Newton in January, 1851. The price was at first 1½d., and afterwards 1d. per number. The issues from the beginning down to July, 1852, probably all that were published, are preserved in the British Museum (P. P. 1424, a.m.). Newton acted as editor, and contributed nearly all the articles relating to the engineers and Trade Unions generally.

had rallied to his help, only one small society standing aloof, the provincial branches came in very slowly. It took three months' persuasion to raise the membership of the amalgamation up to the level of the parent society. Delegate meetings of the Steam-Engine Makers and the Smiths' Societies decided against amalgamation, though many of their branches broke away and joined the new society. But towards the end of May the tide turned. The remaining branches of the Journeymen Steam-Engine and Machine Makers and Millwrights' Society held a delegate meeting, at which it was decided no longer to oppose the amalgamation; and by October Newton and Allan were at the head of a united society of 11,000 members paying 1s. per week each, the largest and most powerful Union that had ever existed in the engineering trades, and far exceeding in membership, and still more in annual income, any other trade society of the time.[1]

The successful accomplishment of the amalgamation was followed by a conflict with the employers, which riveted the attention of the whole Trade Union world upon the new body. The aggressive trade policy initiated by Selsby and Allan in Lancashire, and Newton in London, had been repeatedly confirmed by the delegate meetings of their society, and was formally incorporated in the basis of the larger organisation.[2] The more energetic branches were not slow in acting upon it. In 1851

[1] The largest and most powerful of the other Unions in 1851 were those of the Ironfounders and the Stonemasons, which numbered between four and five thousand members each. It must be remembered that the previous ephemeral associations of the cotton-spinners and miners, which often for a time counted their tens of thousands of members, were exclusively strike organisations, with contributions of 1d. or 2d. per week only. The huge associations of 1830–4 had usually no regular subscription at all, and depended on irregularly paid levies. A trade society which, like the Amalgamated Engineers, could count on a regular income of £500 a week was without precedent.

[2] See the resolutions of the Birmingham Delegate Meeting of the Iron Trades, September 28, 1850, in the *Trades Union Advocate*, November, 1850.

the men at Messrs. Hibbert and Platt's extensive works at Oldham made a series of demands, not only for the abolition of overtime, but also for the exclusion of "labourers and other 'illegal' men" from the machines. With these demands Messrs. Hibbert and Platt and other employers had to comply. The private minutes of the London Executive prove conclusively that this attempt to oust labourers from machines was not authorised by the central body;[1] but as William Newton, now a member of the Executive, acted as the representative of the Oldham men in submitting these demands to Messrs. Hibbert and Platt, the employers, naturally inferring that his action was the direct outcome of the amalgamation, formed, in December, 1851, the Central Association of Employers of Operative Engineers to resist the men's Union.

Meanwhile the London Executive had been consulting the whole of the members on the proposal to abolish systematic overtime and piecework, and had obtained an almost unanimous vote in favour of immediate action. A manifesto was issued to the employers, in which the Executive announced the intention of the society to put an end to piecework and systematic overtime after December 31, 1851. The employers replied by an imperious declaration in the *Times* that a strike at any one establishment would be met seven days later by a general lock-out of the whole engineering trade. The men thereupon offered to submit the question to arbitration, a proposal which the employers ignored. On January 1, 1852, the members of the Amalgamated Society refused to work overtime, and on the 10th the masters closed, as they had threatened, every important engineering establishment in Lancashire and the Metropolis.

The three months' struggle that followed interested the general public more than any previous conflict. The

[1] It was resolved: "That the Executive is prepared to assist the Oldham members to the extent of their power in abolishing systematic overtime, but cannot consent to assist them in removing the unskilled workmen from self-acting machines."

details were described, and the action of the employers and the policy of the Union was discussed in every newspaper. The men found unexpected friends in the little group of "Christian Socialists," who threw themselves heartily into the fray, and rendered excellent service, not only by liberal subscriptions,[1] but also by letters to the newspapers, public lectures, and other explanations of the men's position. The masters remained obdurate, insisting not only upon the unconditional withdrawal of the men's demands, but also upon their signing the well-known "document" forswearing Trade Union membership. The capitalists, in fact, took up the old line of absolute supremacy in their establishments, and expressly denied the men's right to take any collective action whatsoever.

Notwithstanding the subscription of £4,000 by the public, and £5,000 by other trade societies, the funds at the disposal of the Union soon began to run short. The Executive had undertaken to support, not only the 3,500 of its own members and the 1,500 mechanics who were out, but also the 10,000 labourers who had been made idle. Early in February the masters opened their workshops. By the middle of March the issue of the struggle was plain, and during April the men resumed work on the employers' terms. Almost all the masters insisted on the actual signature of the "document" by their men, and most of these, under pressure of imminent destitution, reluctantly submitted, without, however, carrying out their promise by abandoning the Union. Judge Hughes, writing in 1860, describes this act of bad faith by the men as "inexcusable," but there is much to be said for the view taken by the Amalgamation Executive, who declared that they held themselves "and every man who unwillingly puts his hand to that detestable document which is forced upon us to be as much destitute of that power of choice which should precede a contract as if a

[1] Lord Goderich, now the Marquis of Ripon, gave the Executive a cheque for £500 to enable the strike pay to be kept up on a temporary emergency.

pistol were at his head and he had to choose between death and degradation."[1]

A promise extorted under "duress" of this kind carries with it little legal and still less moral obligation, and whatever discredit attaches to the transaction must be ascribed at least as much to the masters who made the demand as to the unfortunate victims of the labour war who unwillingly complied with it.[2]

It was the dramatic events of 1852 which made the establishment of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers a turning-point in the history of the Trade Union Movement. The complete victory gained by the employers did not, as they had hoped, destroy the Engineers' Union. The society was, in fact, never seriously shaken.[3] On the other hand, the publicity which it gained in the conflict gave it a position of unrivalled prominence in the Trade Union world. From 1852 to 1889 the elaborate constitution of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers

[1] Executive Circular of April 26, 1852, in *Operative*, May 1, 1852. A number of the men refused to sign, and many emigrated. E. Vansittart Neale advanced £1,030 to members for this purpose, the whole of which was repaid by the borrowers.

[2] Among the abundant literature on this great struggle may be mentioned the *Account*, by Mr. Thomas (now Judge) Hughes, in the *Report on Trade Societies*, by the Social Science Association, 1860; Mr. J. M. Ludlow's lectures, entitled *The Master Engineers and their Workmen* (London, 1852); a pamphlet, *May I not do what I will with my own?* by E. Vansittart Neale; and the evidence given by William Newton (for the men) and Sidney Smith (for the employers) before the Select Committee on Masters and Operatives (Equitable Councils, &c.) in 1856. The employers' manifestoes will be found in the *Times* from December, 1851, to April, 1852; the men's documents and reports of their meetings in the *Operative* (edited by Newton), and in the *Northern Star*, then at its last gasp.

[3] Its membership at the end of 1852 had fallen from 11,829 to 9,737, but even then it had a balance in hand of £5,382, and within three years the members had increased to 12,553, and the accumulated funds to the unprecedented total of £35,695. And unlike all previous trade societies, its record from 1852 down to the present time has been one of continued growth and prosperity, the membership at the end of 1892, after forty-one years of existence, being 71,000, with a balance in hand of £214,000.

served as the model for all new national trade societies, whilst old organisations found themselves gradually incorporating its leading features. The place occupied in 1830–4 by the cotton-spinners and the builders was, in fact, now taken by the iron trades.

The "New Model" thus introduced differed, both for good and evil, from the typical Trade Unionism of the preceding generation. The engineering societies had, to some extent, inherited the exclusive policy of the organisations of the skilled handicraftsmen of the beginning of the century. Unlike the General Trades Unions of 1830–4, they restricted their membership to legally apprenticed workmen. Their records bear traces of the old idea of the legal incorporation of separate trades, rather than of any general union of "the productive classes." The generous but impracticable "universalism" of the Owenite and Chartist organisations was replaced by the principle of the protection of the vested interests of the craftsman in his occupation. The preface to the rules of the parent society expresses this dominant idea by a forcible analogy:—

"The youth who has the good fortune and inclination for preparing himself as a useful member of society by the study of physics, and who studies that profession with success so as to obtain his diploma from the Surgeons' Hall or College of Surgeons, naturally expects, in some measure, that he is entitled to privileges to which the pretending quack can lay no claim; and if in the practice of that useful profession he finds himself injured by such a pretender, he has the power of instituting a course of law against him. Such are the benefits connected with the learned professions. But the mechanic, though he may expend nearly an equal fortune and sacrifice an equal proportion of his life in becoming acquainted with the different branches of useful mechanism, has no law to protect his privileges." [1] He is therefore urged to join

[1] Preface to Rules of the Journeymen Steam-Engine, Machine Makers, and Millwrights' Friendly Society, edition of 1845.

the society, which aims at securing the same protection of his trade against interlopers as is enjoyed by the learned professions.

This spirit of exclusiveness has had, as we shall hereafter discern, an equivocal effect, not only on the history of the society itself, but on that of the Trade Union Movement. But the contemporary trade movements either did not observe or failed to realise the tendency of this attempt to retain or reconstruct an aristocracy of skilled workmen. What impressed the working men was not the trade policy which had brought about the defeat of 1852, but the admirably thought-out financial and administrative system, which enabled the Union to combine the functions of a trade protection society with those of a permanent insurance company, and thus attain a financial stability hitherto undreamt of. Time proved that this constitution had its peculiar defects. But for over twenty years no Trade Unionist questioned its excellence, and the minute criticism and heated abuse which it evoked from employers and their advocates seemed only another testimony to its effectiveness. We think it worth while, therefore, at the risk of introducing tedious detail, to describe the main features of this "New Model."

In striking contrast with the Cotton-spinners' and Builders' Unions of 1830–4, with their exclusively trade purposes, the societies in the engineering trades had, like the trade organisations of the handicraftsmen of the last century, originated as local benefit clubs. The Journeymen Steam-Engine Makers' Society, for instance, had from the first provided its members with out-of-work pay, a travelling allowance, a funeral benefit, and a lump sum in case of accidental disablement. In 1846 it added to these benefits a sick allowance, and shortly afterwards an old age pension to superannuated members. The administration of these friendly benefits was from the outset the primary object of the organisation. As the local benefit club expanded into a national society by the migration of its members from town to town, the extreme difficulty of

combining local autonomy with a just and economical administration of extensive benefits became apparent. For the society, it must be remembered, was not a federation of independent bodies, each having its own exchequer and contributing to the central fund its determinate quota of the expenses of the central office: it was from the first a single association with a common purse, into which all contributions were paid, and out of which all expenditure, down to the stationery and ink used by a branch secretary, was defrayed. This concentration of funds carried with it the practical advantage of forming a considerable reserve at the disposal of the executive. But so long as it was combined with local autonomy, it was open to the obvious objection that a branch might dispense benefits to its own members with undue liberality, and thus absorb an unfair amount of the moneys of the whole society. And hence we find that in 1838 an attempt was made to centralise the administration, by transforming the local officials from the servants of the branches into agents of the central authority. The inherent love of self-government of the British artisan defeated this proposal, which would inevitably have led to local apathy and suspicion, if not to grosser evils. Some other method of harmonising local autonomy with centralised finance had therefore to be invented.

Under the constitution[1] which the Amalgamated Society took over from the Journeymen Steam-Engine and Machine

[1] This plan of "equalisation" is, so far as we know, peculiar to Trade Unions, though we understand from Dr. Baernreither's *English Associations of Working Men*, pp. 283–4, that a few branches of some of the Friendly Societies have lately initiated a somewhat similar system. Its origin is unknown to us, but the device is traditionally ascribed to the Journeymen Steam-Engine and Machine Makers and Millwrights' Society, established in 1826. It was also in early use by the Steam-Engine Makers' Society, established in 1824. Until the Trade Union Act of 1871 it had a positive use. Depending, as Trade Unions were obliged to do, upon the integrity of their officers, there were great advantages in the wide distribution of the funds, and the local responsibility of each branch for the safe keeping of its share.

Makers and Millwrights, we find this problem solved with considerable astuteness. The branch elects and controls its own local officers, but acts in all cases within rules which provide explicitly for every detail. Each branch retains its own funds and administers the friendly benefits payable to its own members, including the allowance to men out of work. The financial autonomy of the branch is, however, more apparent than real. No penny must be expended except in accordance with precise rules. The branch retains its own funds, but these are the property of the whole society, and at the end of each year the balances are "equalised" by a complicated system of remittances from branch to branch, ordered by the Central Executive in such a way that each branch starts the year with the same amount of capital per member. The cumbrous plan of annual equalisation is a device adopted in order to maintain the feeling of local self-government under a strictly centralised financial system. From the decision of the branch any member may appeal to the Central Executive Council. The decisions of this council on all questions of friendly benefits are, however, strictly limited to the interpretation of the existing laws of the society. These rules, which include in equal detail both the constitutional and the financial code, cannot be altered or modified except by a specially convened meeting of delegates from every district. Careful provision is, moreover, made against the danger of hasty or ill-considered legislation even by this supreme authority. No amendment may be so much as considered without having been circulated to all the branches six weeks prior to the delegate meeting, and having thereupon been discussed and re-discussed by the members at two successive general meetings convened for the purpose. Thus every delegate comes to his legislative duties charged with a direct and even detailed mandate from his constituents. Moreover, it is expressly provided that no friendly benefit shall be abrogated unless the decision of the delegate meeting to that effect is ratified by a majority of two-thirds on a vote of the members of the whole

society. As a friendly society, therefore, the Association consists of a number of self-governing branches acting according to the provisions of a detailed code, and amenable, in respect of its interpretation, to a Central Executive.

As a Trade Union, on the contrary, the Association has been from the first a highly centralised body. The great object of the amalgamation was to secure uniformity in trade policy, and to promote the equalisation of what the economists call "real wages" [1] throughout the whole country. With this view the Central Executive has always retained the absolute power of granting or withholding strike pay. No individual can receive strike allowance from his branch except upon an express order of the Executive. Local knowledge, however, is clearly needed for the decision in matters of trade policy, and on the amalgamation "district" committees were established, consisting of the representatives of neighbouring branches. These committees have no concern with the administration of friendly benefits, which, as we have seen, is the business of each branch. Their function is to guard the local interests of the trade, to watch for encroachments, and to advise the Executive Council in the administration of strike pay. Unlike the branches, they possess no independent authority, and are required to act strictly under the orders of headquarters, to which the minutes of their proceedings are regularly sent for confirmation.

Not less impressive than this elaborate constitution, with its system of checks and counter-checks, was the magnitude of the financial transactions of the new society. The high contribution of a shilling a week, paid with unexampled regularity by a constantly increasing body of members, provided an income which surpassed the wildest dreams of previous Trade Union organisations, and enabled the society to meet any local emergency without serious effort. A large portion of this income was

[1] That is to say, local differences in the cost of living have always been taken into account.

absorbed by the expensive friendly benefits, which were on a scale at that time unfamiliar to the societies in other trades. And when it was found that the contribution of a shilling a week not only met all these requirements, but also provided an accumulating balance, which could be drawn upon for strike pay, the indignation of the employers knew no bounds. For many years the union of friendly benefits with trade protection funds, now considered as the guarantee of a peaceful Trade Union policy, was denounced as a dishonest attempt to subsidise strikes at the expense of the innocent subscriber to a friendly society insurance against sickness, accident, and old age.[1]

In scarcely less marked contrast with the current tradition of Trade Unionism was the publicity which the Amalgamated Engineers from the first courted. Powerful societies, such as the existing Union of Stonemasons, had between 1834 and 1850 elaborated a constitution which proved as durable as that of the Amalgamated Engineers, though of a slightly different type. But the old feeling of secretiveness still dominated both the leaders and the rank and file. The Stonemasons' *Fortnightly Circular*, which, regularly appearing as it has done since 1834, constitutes perhaps the most valuable single record of the Trade Union Movement, was never seen outside the branch meeting-place.[2] At the Royal Commission of 1867–8 the employers' witnesses bitterly complained of their inability to get copies of this publication and of a

[1] Such protests were frequent in the evidence before the Royal Commission of 1867–8, and form the staple of the innumerable criticisms on Trade Unionism between 1852 and 1879. A good vindication of the Trade Union position is contained in Professor Beesly's article in the *Fortnightly Review*, 1867, which was republished as a pamphlet, *The Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners* (London, 1867, 20 pp.).

[2] The unique collection of these circulars, containing not only statistical and other information of the society, but also frequent references to the building trades and the general movement, has been generously placed at our disposal for the purpose of this work, and we have found it of the utmost value.

similar periodical circular of the Bricklayers' Society.[1] As late as 1871 we find the liability to publicity adduced by some Unions as an argument against seeking recognition by the law.

The leaders of the Engineers believed, on the contrary, in the power of advertisement. We have already noticed the two short-lived newspapers which Newton and Allan published in 1850 and 1851–2, for the express purpose of making known the society and its objects. For many years after the amalgamation it was a regular practice to forward to the press, for publication or review, all the monthly, quarterly, and annual reports, as well as the more important of the circulars issued to the members. Representatives were sent to the Conference on Capital and Labour held by the Society of Arts in 1854, and to the congresses of the Social Science Association from 1859 onward. Newton and Allan appear, indeed, to have eagerly seized every opportunity of writing letters to the newspapers, reading papers, and delivering lectures about the organisation which they had established.

It is easy to understand the great influence which, during the next twenty years, this "New Model" exercised upon the Trade Union world. Its most important imitator was the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters, which, as we shall see, arose out of the great London strike of 1859–60. The tailors, in 1866, drew together into an amalgamated society, which adopted, almost without alteration, the whole code of the engineers, and in 1869 the London Society of Compositors appointed a special committee to report upon "the constitution and working of the Amalgamated Trades," with a view to their imitation in the printing industry—an intention which, in spite of the favourable character of the report, was not carried out.[2] Scarcely a trade exists which did not, between 1852 and 1875, either

[1] See, for instance, the evidence of Mault, Questions 3980 in Second Report, and 4086 in Third Report.

[2] Report of Special Committee, 1869.

attempt to imitate the whole constitution of the Amalgamated Engineers, or incorporate one or other of its characteristic features.

The five or six years following the collapse of the great lock-out of 1852, though constituting a period of quiet progress in particular societies, are, for the historian of the general Trade Union Movement, almost a blank. The severe commercial depression of 1846–9 was succeeded by seven years of steadily expanding trade, which furnished no occasion for general reduction of wages. The reaction against the ambitious projects of the Trade Union of 1834 continued to discourage even federal action.[1] Whilst the complete failure of the struggle of the engineers, followed as it was in 1853 by the disastrous strike of the Preston cotton-spinners for a ten per cent. advance, by an equally unsuccessful struggle of the Kidderminster carpet-weavers, and by a fierce and futile conflict by the Dowlais ironworkers,[2] increased the disinclination of the Unions to aggressive trade action on a large scale. The disrepute into which strikes had fallen was intensified by the spread among the more thoughtful working men of the principles of Industrial Co-operation. This new development of Owen's teaching took two forms, both, it need hardly be said, differing fundamentally from the Owenism of 1834. In Lancashire the success of the "Rochdale Pioneers," established in 1844, had led to the rapid extension of the Co-operative Store, the association of consumers for the supply of their own wants. To some extent the stalwart leaders of the Lancashire and Yorkshire working men were diverted from the organisation of trade combinations to the establishment of co-operative shops and corn-mills. Meanwhile the "Christian Socialists" of London had

[1] The National Association of United Trades continued, as we have already seen, in nominal existence until 1860, but after 1852 it sank to a membership of a few thousands, and played practically no part in the Trade Union world.

[2] *Times*, June to December, 1853.

caught up the idea of Buchez, and the Parisian projects of 1848, and were advocating with an almost apostolic fervour the formation of associations of producers, in which groups of working men were to become their own employers.[1]

The generous enthusiasm with which the "Christian Socialists" had thrown themselves into the Engineers' struggle, and their obvious devotion to the interests of Labour, gave their schemes of "Self-governing Workshops" a great vogue. Numberless small undertakings were started by operative engineers, cabinetmakers, tailors, bootmakers, and hatters in the Metropolis, and in other large industrial centres, and for a few years the Executives and Committees of the various Unions vied with each other in recommending co-operative production to their members. But it soon became apparent that this new form of co-operation was intended, not as an adjunct or a development of the Trade Union, but as an alternative form of industrial organisation. For, unlike the Owenites of 1834, the Christian Socialists had no conception of the substitution of profit-making enterprise by the whole body of wage-earners, organised either in a self-contained community, or in a complete Trades Union. They sought only to replace the individual capitalist by self-governing bodies of profit-making workmen. A certain number of the ardent spirits among the London and north country workmen became the managers and secretaries of these undertakings, and ceased to be energetic members of their respective Unions. "We have found," say the Engineers' Executive in their annual report of 1855, "that when a few of our own members have commenced business hitherto they have abandoned the society, and conducted the workshops even worse than other employers." Fortunately for the Trade Union Movement the uniform commercial failure of these

[1] A more detailed account of these developments will be found in *The Co-operative Movement in Great Britain* (London, 1891; second edition, 1893), by Beatrice Potter (Mrs. Sidney Webb).

experiments, so long, at any rate, as they retained their original form of the self-governing workshop, soon became obvious to those concerned. The idea of "Co-operative Production" constantly reappears in contemporary Trade Union records, but after the failure of the co-operative establishments of 1848–52 it ceases, for nearly twenty years, to be a question of "practical politics" in the Trade Union world.

In spite of this intellectual diversion the work of Trade Union consolidation was being steadily carried on. The Amalgamated Engineers doubled their numbers in the ten years that followed their strike, and by 1861 their Union had accumulated the unprecedented balance of £73,398. The National Societies of Ironfounders and Stonemasons grew in a similar proportion. A revival of Trade Unionism took place among the textile operatives. The present association of Lancashire cotton-spinners began its career in 1853, whilst the cotton-weavers secured in the same year what has been fitly termed their Magna Charta, the "Blackburn List" of piecework rates. But with the exception of the building trades, Trade Unionism assumed, during these years, a peaceful attitude. The leaders no longer declaimed against "the idle classes," but sought to justify the Trade Union position with arguments based on middle-class economics. The contributions of the Amalgamated Engineers are described "as a general voluntary rate in aid of the Poor's Rate."[1] The Executive Council cannot doubt that employers will not "regard a society like ours with disfavour. They will begin to understand that it is not intended, nor adapted, to damage their interests, but rather to advance them, by elevating the character of their workmen, and proportionately lessening their own responsibilities." The project of substituting "Councils of Conciliation" for strikes and lock-outs grew in favour with Trade Union leaders. Hundreds of petitions in

[1] *Adaress of the Executive Council of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers to their Fellow-Workmen* (London, 1855).

favour of their establishment were got up by the National Association of United Trades, then on its last legs. The House of Commons Committees in 1856 and 1860 found the operatives in all trades disposed to support the principle of voluntary submission to arbitration. For a brief period it seemed as if peace was henceforth to prevail over the industrial world.

The era of strikes which set in with the contraction of trade in 1857 proved how fallacious had been these hopes. The building trades, in particular, had remained less affected than the Engineers or the Cotton Operatives by the change of tone. The local branches of the Stonemasons, Bricklayers, and other building trade operatives, often against the wish of their Central Committees, were engaged between 1853 and 1859 in an almost constant succession of little strikes against separate firms, in which the men were generally successful in gaining advances of wages.[1] These years were, moreover, notable for the recognition in the provincial building trades of "working

[1] See *The Strikes, their Extent, Evils, and Remedy, being a Description of the General Movement of the Mass of the Building Operatives throughout the United Kingdom*, by Vindex (London, 1853, 56 pp.). One consequence of this renewed outburst of strikes was the appointment in 1858 by the newly formed National Association for the Promotion of Social Science of a Committee to inquire into trade societies and disputes. This inquiry, conducted by able and zealous investigators, resulted in 1860 in the publication of a volume which contains the best collection of Trade Union material and the most impartial account of Trade Union action that has ever been issued. As a source of history and economic illustration this *Report on Trade Societies and Strikes* (London, 1860, 651 pp.) is far superior to the Parliamentary Blue Books of 1824, 1825, 1838, and 1867–8. Among the contributors were Mr. Godfrey Lushington (now Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department), Mr. J. M. Ludlow (afterwards Registrar of Friendly Societies), Mr. Thomas (now Judge) Hughes, Q.C., Mr. (now Right Hon.) G. Shaw-Lefevre, M.P., Mr. F. D. Longe, and Mr. Frank Hill. The Committee was presided over by the late Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth, and amongst its other members may be mentioned W. E. Forster, Henry Fawcett, Mr. R. H. Hutton, Rev. F. D. Maurice, Dr. William Farr, and one Trade Union Secretary, T. J. Dunning, of the London Bookbinders.

rules," or signed agreements between employers and workmen (usually between the local Masters' Associations and the Trade Unions), specifying in minute detail the conditions of the collective bargain. Without doubt the adoption of these rules was a step forward in the direction of industrial peace; but, like international treaties, they were frequently preceded by desperate conflicts in which both sides exhausted their resources, and learnt to respect the strength of the other party. With the depression of trade more important disputes occurred. During 1858 fierce conflicts arose between masters and men in the flint glass industry, and in the West Yorkshire coalfield. The introduction of the sewing-machine into the boot and shoemaking villages of Northamptonshire led to a series of angry struggles. But of the great disputes of 1858 to 1861, the builders' strike in the Metropolis in 1859–60 was by far the most important in its effect upon the Trade Union Movement.

The dispute of 1859 originated in the growing movement for a shortening of the hours of labour. The demand for a Nine Hours Day in the Building Trades was first made by the Liverpool Stonemasons in 1846, and renewed by the London Masons in 1853. In neither case, however, was the claim persisted in. Four years later the movement was revived by the London Carpenters, whose memorial to their employers was met, after a joint conference, by a decisive refusal. Meanwhile the Stonemasons were seeking to obtain the Saturday half-holiday, which the employers equally refused. This led, in the autumn of 1858, to the formation of a Joint Committee of Carpenters, Masons, and Bricklayers, which, on November 18, 1858, addressed a dignified memorial to the master builders, urging that the hours of labour should be shortened by one per day, and that future building contracts should be accepted on this basis. At first ignored by the employers, this request was eventually refused as decidedly as it had been in 1853 and 1857. The Joint Committee there-

upon made a renewed attempt by petitioning four firms selected by ballot. Among these was that of Messrs. Trollope, who promptly dismissed one of the men who had presented the memorial. This action led to an immediate strike against Messrs. Trollope. Within a fortnight every master builder in London employing over fifty men had closed his establishment, and twenty-four thousand men were peremptorily deprived of their employment. The controversy which raged in the columns of contemporary newspapers during this pitched battle between Capital and Labour brought out in strong relief the state of mind of the Metropolitan employers. Uninfluenced by the progress of public opinion, or by the new tone of respect and moderation adopted by Trade Union leaders, the London employers took up the position of their predecessors of 1834. They absolutely refused to recognise the claim of the representatives of the men even to discuss with them the conditions of employment. This attitude was combined with a determined attempt to destroy all combination, the instrument adopted being the well-worn Document. The Central Association of Master Builders resolved in terms almost identical with its predecessor of 1834, that "no member of this Association shall engage or continue in his employment any contributor to the funds of any Trades Union or Trades Society which practises interference with the regulation of any establishment, the hours or terms of labour, the contracts or agreements of employers or employed, or the qualification or terms of service."

This declaration of war on Trade Unionism gained for the men on strike the support of the whole Trade Union world. The Central Committee of the great society of Stonemasons, which had hitherto discouraged the Metropolitan Nine Hours Movement as premature, took up the struggle against the Document as one of vital importance. Meetings of delegates from the organised Metropolitan trades were held in order to rally the forces

of Trade Unionism to the cause of the builders. The subscriptions which poured in from all parts of the kingdom demonstrated the possession, in the hands of trade societies, of heavy and hitherto unsuspected reserves of financial strength. The London Pianoforte Makers contributed £300. The Flint Glass Makers, who had just emerged from a prolonged struggle on their own account, sent a similar sum. "Trades Committees" were formed in all the industrial centres, and remitted large amounts. Glasgow and Manchester sent over £800 each, and Liverpool over £500. The newly formed Yorkshire Miners' Association forwarded £230. The Boilermakers, Coopers, and Coachmakers' Societies were especially liberal in their gifts. But the sensation of the subscription list was the grant by the Amalgamated Engineers of three successive weekly donations of £1,000 each—an event which is still recalled with emotion by the survivors of the struggle. Altogether some £23,000 were subscribed (exclusive of the payments by the societies directly concerned), an amount far in excess of any previous strike subsidy.

Such abundant support enabled the men to defeat the employers' aims, though not to secure their own demands. The Central Association of Master Builders clung desperately to the Document, but failed to obtain an adequate number of men willing to subscribe to its terms. In December, 1859, a suggestion was made by Lord St. Leonards that the Document be withdrawn, a lengthy statement of the law relating to trade combinations being hung up in all the establishments as a substitute. The employers' obstinacy held out for two months longer, but finally succumbed in February, 1860, when the Platonic suggestion of Lord St. Leonards was adopted, and the embittered dispute was brought to an end.

This drawn battle between the forces of Capital and Labour ranks as a leading event in Trade Union history, not only because it revived the feeling of solidarity between different trades, but also on account of the

importance of two consolidating organisations to which it gave birth Out of the Building Trades Strike of 1859–60 arose the London Trades Council (to be described in the following chapter), and the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters, the most notable adoption by another trade of the "New Model" introduced by Newton and Allan.

The strike had revealed to the London carpenters the complete state of disorganisation into which their industry had fallen. It was they, it is true, who had initiated the Nine Hours Movement in the Metropolis, but the committee which memorialised the employers had represented no body of organised workmen. George Potter, who was the leader of this movement, could draw around him only a group of delegates elected by the men in each shop. There were, indeed, not more than about a thousand carpenters in London who were members of any trade society whatsoever, and these were scattered among numerous tiny benefit clubs. The Friendly Society of Operative Carpenters, which, as we have seen, was a militant branch of the Builders' Union of 1830–34, had, like the Stonemasons' Society, maintained a continuous existence. Unlike that society, however, it had kept the old character of a loose federation for trade purposes only, depending for its finances upon occasional levies. Perhaps for this reason it had lost its exclusive hold upon the provinces, and had gained no footing in London. As a competent observer remarks: "At the time of the 1859–60 strikes the masons alone of the building trades were organised into a single society extending throughout England, and providing not only for trade purposes, but for the ordinary benefits. . . . The London masons locked out were supported regularly and punctually by their society, and could have continued the struggle for an indefinite time; but the other trades, split up into numerous local societies, were soon reduced to extremities."[1] The Carpenters' Committee saw with

[1] Prof. E. S. Beesly, *Fortnightly Review*, 1867.

envy the capacity of the Stonemasons' Society to provide long-continued strike pay for its members, and were profoundly impressed by the successive donations of £1,000 each made by the Amalgamated Engineers. Directly the strike was over, the leading members of the little benefit clubs met together to discuss the formation of a national organisation on the Engineers' model. William Allan lent them every assistance in adapting the rules of his own society to the carpenters' trade, and watched over the preliminary proceedings. The new society started on June 4, 1860, with a few hundred members. For the first two years its progress was slow; but in October, 1862, it had the good fortune to elect as its general secretary a man whose ability and cautious sagacity promptly raised it to a position of influence in the Trade Union world. Robert Applegarth, secretary of a local Carpenters' Union at Sheffield, had been quick to perceive the advantages of amalgamation, and had brought his society over with him. Under his administration the new Union advanced by leaps and bounds, and in a few years it stood, in magnitude of financial transactions and accumulated funds, second only to the Amalgamated Society of Engineers itself. Moreover Applegarth's capacity brought him at once into that little circle of Trade Union leaders whose activity forms during the next ten years the central point of Trade Union history.

CHAPTER V.

THE JUNTA AND THEIR ALLIES.

MANY influences had, during the preceding years, been co-operating to form what may almost be described as a cabinet of the Trade Union Movement. The establishment of such great trade friendly societies as the Amalgamated Engineers had created, in some sense, a new school of Trade Union officials, face to face with intricate problems of administration and finance. The presence in London of the headquarters of these societies brought their salaried officers into close personal intimacy with each other. And it so happened that during these years the little circle of secretaries included men of marked character and ability, who were, both by experience and by temperament, admirably fitted to guide the movement through the acute crisis which we shall presently describe.

Foremost in this little group—which we shall hereafter call the Junta—were the general secretaries of the two amalgamated societies of Engineers and Carpenters, William Allan and Robert Applegarth, whose success in building up these powerful organisations have given them great influence in Trade Union councils. Bound to these in close personal friendship were Daniel Guile, the general secretary of the old and important national society of Ironfounders, Edwin Coulson, general secretary of the "London Order" of Bricklayers, and George Odger, a prominent member of a small union of highly skilled makers of ladies' shoes, and an influential leader of London working-class Radicalism.

William Allan was the originator of the "New Unionism" of his time." [1] We have already described how, with the aid of William Newton, he had gathered up the scattered fragments of organisation in the engineering trade, and had adapted the elaborate constitution and financial system of an old-established society to the needs of a great national amalgamation. In long hours of patient labour in the office he had built up an extremely methodical, if somewhat cumbrous, system of financial checks and trade reports, by which the exact position of each of his tens of thousands of members was at all times recorded in his official pigeon-holes. The permanence of his system is the best testimony to its worth. Even to-day the Engineers' head office in Stamford Street retains throughout the impress of Allan's tireless and methodical industry. Excessive caution, red-tape precision, an almost miserly solicitude for the increase of the society's funds, were among Allan's defects. But at a time when working men "agitators" were universally credited with looseness in money matters, and incapacity for strenuous and regular mental effort, these defects, however equivocal may have been their ultimate effect on the policy and development of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, produced a favourable impression on the public. Allan, moreover, though not a brilliant speaker, or a man of

[1] William Allan was born of Scotch parents at Carrickfergus, Ulster, in 1813. His father, who was manager of a cotton-spinning mill, removed to a mill near Glasgow, and William became in 1825 a piecer in a cotton factory at Gateside. Three years later he left the mill to be bound apprentice to Messrs. Holdsworth, a large engineering firm at Anderston, Glasgow. At the age of nineteen, before his apprenticeship was completed, he married the niece of one of the partners. In 1835 he went to work as a journeyman engineer at Liverpool, moving thence, with the railway works, to their new centre at Crewe, where he joined his Union. On the imprisonment of Selsby, in 1847, he became its general secretary, retaining this office when, in 1851, the society became merged in the Amalgamated Society of Engineers. For over twenty years he was annually re-elected secretary of this vast organisation, dying at last in office in 1874.

wide general interests, was a keen working-class politician, whose temper and judgment could always be depended on. And he has left behind him the tradition, not only of absolute integrity and abnormal industry, but also of a singular freedom from personal vanity or ambition.

Whilst Allan aimed at transforming the "paid agitator" into the trusted officer of a great financial corporation, Robert Applegarth sought to win, for the Trade Union organisation, a recognised social and political status. Astute and lawyer-like in temperament, he instinctively made use of those arguments which were best fitted to overcome the prejudices and disarm the criticisms of middle-class opponents. Nor did he limit himself to justifying the ways of Trade Unionists to the world at large. He made persistent attempts to enlarge the mental horizon of the rank and file of his own movement, opening out to those whose vision had hitherto been limited to the strike and the tap-room, whole vistas of social and political problems in which they as working men were primarily concerned. Hence we find him, during his career as general secretary, a leading member of the famous "International," [1] and an energetic promoter of

[1] The celebrated "International Association of Working Men," which loomed so large in the eyes of governments and the governing classes about 1869–70, had arisen out of the visit of two French delegates to London in 1863, to concert joint action on behalf of Poland. It was formally established at a meeting in London on September 28, 1864, at which an address was given by Karl Marx. Its fundamental aim was the union of working men of all countries for the emancipation of labour; and its principles went on to declare that "the subjection of the man of labour to the man of capital lies at the bottom of all servitude, all social misery, and all political dependence." Between 1864 and 1870, branches were established in nearly all European countries, as well as in the United States, the majority of trade societies in some European countries joining in a body. The central administration was entrusted to a General Council of fifty-five members sitting in London, which was composed of London residents of various nationalities, elected by the branches in the countries to which they belonged. The General Council had, however, no legislative or other control over the branches, and in practice served as little more than a means of communication

the Labour Representation League, the National Education League, and various philanthropic and political associations. Political reformers became eager to secure his adhesion to their projects: he was, for instance, specially invited to attend the important conferences of the National Education League at Birmingham as the special representative of the working classes; and it was owing to his reputation as a social reformer that he was in 1870 selected to sit on the Royal Commission upon the Contagious Diseases Acts, thus becoming the first working man to be styled by his Sovereign "Our Trusty and Well-beloved." Open-minded, alert, and conciliatory, he

between them, each country managing its own affairs in its own way. The principles and programme of the Association underwent a steady development in the succession of annual international congresses attended by delegates from the various branches. The extent to which English working men really participated in its fundamental objects is not clear. In 1870 Odger was president, and Applegarth chairman, of the General Council, which included Mr. Benjamin Lucraft, afterwards a member of the London School Board, and other well-known working-men politicians. But few English Trade Unions (among them being the Bootmakers and Curriers) joined in their corporate capacity; and when, in October, 1866, the General Council invited the London Trades Council to join, or, that failing, to give permission for a representative of the International to attend its meetings, with a view of promptly reporting all Continental strikes, the Council's minutes show that both requests were refused. The London Trades Council declined, indeed, to recognise the International even as the authorised medium of communication with trade societies abroad, and decided to communicate with these directly. Applegarth attended several of the Continental congresses as a delegate from England, and elaborately explained the aims and principles of the Association in an interview published in the *New York World* of May 21, 1870. After the suppression of the Commune the branches in France were crushed out of existence; and the membership in England and other countries fell away. The annual Congress held in 1872 at the Hague decided to transfer the General Council to New York, and the "International" ceased to play any part in the English Labour Movement. In America, though the name of the organisation survives, it has never resumed any effective international relations. An interesting account of its Trade Unionist action appeared in the *Fortnightly Review* for November, 1870, by Professor E. S. Beesly.

formed an ideal representative of the English Labour Movement in the political world.[1]

The permanent officials of the Ironfounders and the London Bricklayers were men of less originality than Allan or Applegarth. Guile was a man of attractive personality and winning manner, gifted with a certain rugged eloquence. Coulson is described by an opponent as being "stolid and obstinate," and again as "bricky and stodgy"; but the expansion, under his influence, of the little London society of Bricklayers into a powerful union of national scope, proves him to have possessed administrative ability of no mean order. The special distinction of all four alike was their business capacity, shown by the persistency and success with which they pursued, each in his own trade, the policy originated by Newton and Allan,

[1] Robert Applegarth, the son of a quartermaster in the Royal Navy, was born at Hull on January 23, 1833. At the age of eleven he went to work as errand boy, eventually drifting into the shop of a joiner and cabinetmaker, where, unapprenticed, he picked up the trade as best he could. In 1852 he moved to Sheffield; but in 1855, on the death of his parents, he emigrated to the United States, returning to Sheffield in the following year, as the health of his wife did not allow her to follow him to the land of promise. Joining the local Carpenters' Union, he quickly became its most prominent member, and brought it over in a body when the formation in 1861 of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners offered a prospect of more efficient trade action. Elected general secretary in 1862, he retained the office until 1871, when, in consequence of various personal disputes in the society, he voluntarily resigned. In 1870, on the formation of the London School Board, he stood as a candidate for the Lambeth division, but was unsuccessful, though he received 7,600 votes. In the same year he was invited to become a candidate for Parliament for the borough of Maidstone, but he retired in favour of Sir John Lubbock. In 1871 he was appointed a member of the Royal Commission on the Contagious Diseases Act. On resigning his secretaryship he turned for a time to journalism, and acted as war correspondent in France for an American newspaper. Shortly afterwards he became foreman to a firm of manufacturers of engineering and diving apparatus, eventually becoming the proprietor of this flourishing business. Mr. Applegarth, who is (1894) the sole survivor of the "Junta" of 1867–71, still retains his membership of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters, and his interest in Trade Unionism, about which he has given us valuable documents and reminiscences.

of basing Trade Union organisation upon an insurance company of national extent. George Odger brought to the Junta quite other qualities than the cautious industry of Allan or the lawyer-like capacity of Applegarth. Of the five men we have mentioned he was the only one who continued to work at his trade, and who retained to the last the full flavour of a working-class leader. An orator of remarkable power, he swayed popular meetings at his will, and was the idol of Metropolitan Radicalism. But he was no mere demagogue. Beneath his brilliant rhetoric and emotional fervour there lay a large measure of political shrewdness, and he shared with his colleagues the capacity for deliberately concerted action and personal subordination. His dilatory and unbusinesslike habits made him incapable of building up a great organisation. Had he stood alone, he would have added little to the strength of Trade Unionism; as the loyal adherent of the great officials, and their popular mouthpiece to the working-class world, Unionist and non-Unionist alike, he gave the movement a wider basis, and attracted into its ranks every ardent reformer belonging to the artisan class.[1]

[1] Daniel Guile was born at Liverpool, October 21, 1814, the son of a shoemaker. Bound apprentice to an ironfounder in 1827, he joined the Union in June, 1834. In 1863 he became its corresponding secretary, a position he retained until his retirement at the end of 1881. He died December 7, 1883.

George Odger, the son of a Cornish miner, was born in 1820, at Rouborough, near Tavistock, South Devon, and became a shoemaker at an early age. Tramping about the country, as was then customary, he eventually settled in London, becoming a prominent member of the Ladies' Shoemakers' Society. His first important public action was in connection with the meetings of delegates of London trades on the building trades lock-out in 1859. On the formation of the London Trades Council in 1860 he became one of its leading members, and from 1862 until the reconstruction of the Council in 1872 he acted as its secretary. As one of the leaders of London working-class Radicalism he made five attempts to get into Parliament, but was each time baulked by the opposition of the official Liberal party. At Chelsea in 1868, at Stafford in 1869, and at Bristol in 1870 he retired rather than split the vote, but at Southwark in 1870 he went to the poll, and failed of success only by 304 votes, the official Liberal, Sir

It is difficult to-day to convey any adequate idea of the extraordinary personal influence exercised by these five men, not only on their immediate associates, but also as interpreters of the Trade Union Movement, upon the public and the governing classes. For the first time in the century the working-class movement came under the direction, not of middle and upper class sympathisers like Place, Owen, Roberts, O'Connor, or Duncombe, but of genuine workmen specially trained for the position. For the first time, moreover, the leaders of working-class politics stood together in a compact group, united by a close personal friendship, and absolutely free from any trace of that suspiciousness or disloyalty which have so often marred popular movements. They brought to their task, it is true, no consistent economic theory or political philosophy. They subscribed with equal satisfaction to the crude Collectivism of the "International," and the dogmatic industrial Individualism of the English Radicals. This absence of a definite basis to their political activity accounts, we think, for the drying up of Trade Union politics after their withdrawal. We shall have occasion hereafter to notice other "defects of their qualities," and the way in which these subsequently stunted the further development of their own movement. But it was largely their very limitations which made them, at this particular crisis, such valuable representatives of the Trade Union Movement. They accepted, with perfect good faith, the economic Individualism of their middle-class opponents, and claimed only that freedom to combine which the more enlightened members of that class were willing to concede to them. Their genuine if somewhat restrained

Sydney Waterlow, being at the bottom with 2,966 votes as against 4,382 given for Odger. At the General Election of 1874 he again stood, to be once more opposed by both Liberals and Conservatives with the same result as before. He died in 1877, his funeral, which was attended by Professor E. Beesly, Professor Fawcett, and Sir Charles Dilke, being made the occasion of a remarkable demonstration by the London working men. An eulogy of him by Professor Beesly appeared in the *Weekly Dispatch*, March 11, 1877.

enthusiasm for political and industrial freedom gave them a persistency and determination which no check could discourage. Their understanding of the middle-class point of view, and their appreciation of the practical difficulties of the situation, saved them from being mere demagogues. For the next ten years, when it was all important to obtain a legal status for trade societies, and to obliterate the unfortunate impression created by the Sheffield outrages, their qualities exactly suited the emergency. The possession of good manners, though it may seem a trivial detail, was not the least of their advantages. To perfect self-respect and integrity they added correctness of expression, habits of personal propriety, and a remarkable freedom from all that savoured of the tap-room. In Allan and Applegarth, Guile, Coulson, and Odger, the traducers of Trade Unionism found themselves confronted with a combination of high personal character, exceptional business capacity, and a large share of that official decorum which the English middle class find so impressive.

Round these central personalities grouped themselves in London a number of men of like temperament and aims. We have already had occasion to mention T. J. Dunning, of the Bookbinders, grown old in the service of Trade Unionism. The building trades contributed a younger generation, all still living—Messrs. John Prior, George Howell, Henry Broadhurst, and George Shipton. The whole group were in touch with certain provincial leaders, who adhered to the new views, and acted in close concert with the Junta. Of these, the most noteworthy were Alexander Macdonald, then busily organising the Miners' National Union, John Kane,[1] of the North of England

[1] John Kane was born at Alnwick, Northumberland, in 1819. Sent to work at seven, he served in various capacities until the age of fifteen, when he moved to Newcastle-on-Tyne, and entered the iron-works of Messrs. Hawke, at Gateshead. Here he took part in the Chartist and other progressive movements, making a vain attempt in 1842 to form a Union in his trade. Not until 1863 was a durable

Ironworkers, William Dronfield, the Sheffield compositor, and Alexander Campbell, the leading spirit of the Glasgow Trades Council.

The distinctive policy of the Junta was the combination of extreme caution in trade matters, and energetic agitation for political reforms. It is, indeed, somewhat doubtful how far Allan and Applegarth, Coulson and Guile shared the popular belief that trade combinations could effect a general rise of wages, or resist a general reduction in a falling market. They had more faith in the moral force of great reserve funds, by the aid of which, dispensed in liberal out-of-work donations, one capitalist, or even a whole group of capitalists, might be effectually prevented from obtaining labour at anything but the standard conditions. Their trade policy was, in fact, restricted to securing for every workman those terms which the best employers were willing voluntarily to grant. For this reason they were constantly accused of apathy by those hotter spirits whose idea of successful Trade Unionism was a series of general strikes for advances or against reductions. The Junta were really looking in another direction for the emancipation of the worker. They believed that a levelling down of all political privileges, and the opening out of educational and social opportunities to all classes of the community, would bring in its train a large measure of economic equality. Under the influence of these leaders, the London Unions, and eventually those of the provinces, were drawn into a whole series of political agitations, for the Franchise, for amendment of the Master and Servant Law, for new Mines Regulation Acts, for National Education, and finally for the full legalisation of Trade Unions themselves.

Practical difficulties hampered the complete execution of the Junta's policy. The use of the Trade Union

society established, and when in 1868 the Amalgamated Ironworkers' Association was formed on a national basis, John Kane became general secretary, a position retained until his death in March, 1876.

organisation for Parliamentary agitation, on which Macdonald, Applegarth, and Odger based all their expectations of progress, came as a new idea to the Trade Union world. The rank and file of Trade Unionists, still excluded from the franchise, took practically no interest in any social or political reform, and regarded their trade combinations exclusively as means of extorting a rise of wages, or of compelling their fellow-workmen to join their clubs. This was especially the case with the provincial organisations, where the officials usually shared the obscurantism of their members. The "Manchester Order" of Bricklayers and the General Union of Carpenters (headquarters, Manchester) were, like the Midland Brickmakers and the Sheffield Cutlers, still wedded to the old ideas of secrecy and coercion, whilst the powerful society of Masons, then centred at Leeds, held aloof from the general movement. But this resistance was not confined to the older societies, nor to those of any particular locality. All the Unions of that time, even those of the Metropolis, retained a strong traditional repugnance to political action. In many cases the rules expressly forbade all mention of politics in their meetings. And although the societies could be occasionally induced to take joint action of a political character in defence of Trade Unionism itself, not even the great influence of the Junta upon their own Unions sufficed to persuade the members to turn their organisations to account for legislative reform. The Junta turned therefore to the newly established Trades Councils and made these the political organs of the Trade Union world.

The formation between 1858 and 1867 of permanent Trades Councils in the leading industrial centres was an important step in the consolidation of the Trade Union Movement. Local delegate meetings, summoned to deal with particular emergencies, had been a feature of Trade Union organisation, at any rate since the very beginning of the present century. In early times every important

strike had its committee of sympathisers from other trade societies, who collected subscriptions and rendered what personal aid they could. But the most notable of these committees were those which started up in all the centres of Trade Unionism when the movement was threatened by some particular legal or Parliamentary danger. Such joint committees had in 1825 contributed powerfully to defeat the re-enactment of the Combination Laws, in 1834 to arouse public feeling in the case of the Dorchester labourers, and in 1838 to conduct the Trade Union case before the Parliamentary Committee of that year. But these earlier committees were formed only for particular emergencies, and had, so far as we know, no continuous existence. By 1860 permanent councils were in existence in Glasgow, Sheffield, Liverpool, and Edinburgh, and their example was, in 1861, followed by the London trades.[1]

[1] The first permanent committee of the nature of a Trades Council appears to have been, according to our information, the Liverpool "Trades Guardian Association," which was established in 1848 with the object of protecting Trade Unions from suppression by the employers' use of the criminal law. From its printed report and balance sheet for 1848, and the references in the *Fortnightly Circular* of the Stonemasons' Society for November 23, 1848, we gather that it took vigorous action to protect the Sheffield razor-grinders from malicious prosecution, and to help the Liverpool masons who had been indicted for conspiracy. Of its activity from 1850 to 1857 we possess no records, but in August, 1857, it subscribed £400 in aid of the Liverpool cabinetmakers, and in 1861 it was assisting the London bricklayers' strike. In July of that year it was merged in a "United Trades Protection Association," formed upon the model of the newly established London Trades Council. In Glasgow there appears to have been, since 1825, an almost continuous series of joint committees of delegates for particular purposes. An attempt was made in 1851 to place these on a permanent footing, but the trades soon ceased to send delegates. A renewed attempt in 1858, made at the instance of Alexander Campbell, met with greater success; and the Council then established, composed principally of the building trades, was, in 1860, enjoying a vigorous life. Sheffield, too, had long had ephemeral federations of the local trades, which came near having a continuous existence. One of these, the "Association of Organised Trades," established in 1857 with the special object of assisting the Sheffield Typographical Society in defending a libel action, became the permanent Trades Council. Other towns, such as Dublin and

Like many provincial organisations, the London Trades Council originated in a "Strike Committee." During the winter of 1859–60 weekly meetings of delegates from the Metropolitan trades had been held to support the Building Operatives in their resistance to the "document." "At

Bristol, had almost constantly some kind of Council of the local trades. An appeal of the Trade Defence Association of Manchester, signed by representatives of nine thousand operatives on behalf of the dyers' strike, occurs in the Stonemasons' *Fortnightly Circular* for 1854. In London, as may be gathered from George Odger's evidence before the Master and Servant Law Committee in 1867, the meetings of "Metropolitan Trades Delegates" had been particularly frequent since 1848. In 1852, for instance, as we discover from the *Bookbinders' Trade Circular* (November, 1853), a committee of the London trades took the case of the Wolverhampton tinplate workers out of the hands of the somewhat decrepit National Association of United Trades, and bore the whole cost of these expensive legal proceedings. No sooner had the task of this committee been completed, when another committee was formed to assist the strike of the Preston cotton operatives. It was to this committee, sitting at the Bell Inn, Old Bailey, the historic meeting-place of London Trade Unionism, that Lloyd Jones, in March, 1855, communicated his fears that a certain Friendly Societies' Bill, then before the House of Commons, would make the legal position of trade societies even more equivocal than it then was. A "Metropolitan Trades Committee on the Friendly Societies' Bill" was accordingly formed, the printed report of which is reviewed by Dunning in his *Circular* for December, 1855. From this we learn that it was presided over by William Allan, and that it included his old friend, William Newton, as well as the general secretaries of the Stonemasons' and Bricklayers' Societies, and representatives of the Compositors and Bookbinders. It was supported by eighty-seven different Trade Unions with forty-eight thousand members, who contributed a halfpenny per member to cover the expenses. Its Parliamentary action seems to have been vigorous and effective. The objectionable clauses were, by skilful Parliamentary lobbying, dropped out of the Bill, and what seemed at the time to be an important step towards the legalisation of trade societies was, through the help of Mr. Thomas Hughes and Lord Goderich, secured. Between 1858 and 1867 Trades Councils were established in about a dozen of the largest towns. The Trade Union expansion of 1870–73 saw their number doubled. But their great increase was one of the effects of the great wave of Trade Union organisation which swept over the country in 1889–91, when over sixty new councils were established, and those already in existence were reorganised and greatly increased in membership.

the termination of that memorable struggle," states the Second Annual Report of the London Trades Council, "it was felt that something should be done to establish a general trades committee so as to be able on emergency to call the trades together with despatch for the purpose of rendering each other advice or assistance as the circumstances required."[1] In March, 1860, the provisional committee formed with this object issued an "Address" to the trades, which resulted, on July 10, 1860, in the first meeting of the present London Trades Council.

It is interesting to notice that the Council, at the outset, was composed mainly of the representatives of the smaller societies. The Executive Committee elected at its first meeting included no delegates from the engineers, compositors, masons, bricklayers, or ironfounders, who were then, as now, the most influential of the London Trade Societies. The first action of the young Council affords a significant indication of the feeling of isolation which led to its formation. In order to facilitate communications with other trade societies throughout the kingdom it resolved to compile a *General Trades Union Directory*, containing the names and addresses of all Trade Union secretaries. This praiseworthy enterprise took up all the attention of the new body for the first year, and the printing of two thousand copies of the result of its work crippled its finances for long afterwards. For, unfortunately, the *General Trades Union Directory*, published at one shilling per copy, did not sell, and was, we fear, soon consigned to the pulping mill, as we have, after exhaustive search, been able to discover only one copy in existence.[2]

But the direction of the Council was falling into abler

[1] Second Annual Report of London Trades Council, March 31, 1862.

[2] No copy is preserved in the British Museum or other library known to us, nor among the archives of the Trades Council itself. Mr. Robert Applegarth kindly presented us with the only copy we have ever seen.

hands. In 1861 Mr. George Howell became secretary, to be succeeded in the following year by George Odger, who for the next ten years remained its most prominent member. The Amalgamated Society of Engineers joined in 1861, and the veteran Dunning brought over the old established Union of Bookbinders. By 1864, at any rate, the new organisation was entirely dominated by the Junta. The two "amalgamated" societies of Engineers and Carpenters supplied, in some years, half its income. The great trade friendly society of Ironfounders and the growing "London Order" of Bricklayers sent their general secretaries to its meetings. The Council became, in effect, a joint committee of the officers of the large national societies. In the meetings at the old Bell Inn, under the shadow of Newgate, we have the beginnings of an informal cabinet of the Trade Union world.

Meanwhile war had again broken out between the master builders and their operatives, caused partly by a renewed agitation for the Nine Hours Day, and partly by the employers' desire to substitute payment by the hour for the previous custom of payment by the day.[1] For the

[1] On receipt of a memorial from the operatives asking for the introduction of the Nine Hours Day, three of the principal London builders gave notice that henceforth they would engage their workmen, not by the day, but by the hour. "This arrangement," they added, "of payment by the hour will enable any workman employed by us to work any number of hours he may think proper." This specious proposal involved a total abandonment of the principle of Collective Bargaining. What the master builders proposed was, in effect, to do away with the very conception of a normal day, and to revert, as far as the hours were concerned, to separate contracts with each individual workman. The workmen realised what they failed clearly to explain, that the proffered freedom was illusory. In the modern organisation of industry on a large scale, there can be no freedom for the individual workman to drop his tools at whatever moment he chooses. Without a concerted normal day, each workman must inevitably find his task continue as long as the engines are going or the works are open. The real question at issue was how the common hours of labour should be fixed. The master builders of 1861 rightly calculated that if each man was really free to earn as many hours' wages in the day as they chose to offer him, the hours

historian of the general movement the dispute is chiefly important as furnishing the occasion of the first intervention of the talented group of young barristers and literary men who, from this time forth, became the trusted legal experts and political advisers of the leaders of the Trade Union Movement. The workmen had totally failed to make clear their objection to the Hour System, or even to obtain a hearing of their case. Their position was, for the first time, intelligibly explained in two brilliant letters addressed to the newspapers by eight Positivists and Christian Socialists, which did much to bring about the tacit compromise in which the struggle ended.[1]

Of more immediate interest to us is the action taken by the newly-formed London Trades Council. Among the building operations suspended by the dispute was the construction, by a large contractor, of the new Chelsea barracks. The War Department saw no harm in permitting him to engage the sappers of the Royal Engineers to take the place of the men on strike. A similar course had been taken by the Government in strikes of 1825 and 1834. But the Trade Unions were now too powerful to allow of any such interference in their battles. A delegate meeting of the London trades, comprising representatives of fifty industries and fifty thousand operatives,

during which the whole body would work would, in effect, be governed, not by the general convenience, but by the desire and capacity of those willing to work the longest day. On this, the essential issue, the men maintained their position. The normal day in the London building trades was tacitly fixed according to the prevailing custom, and has since been repeatedly regulated and reduced by formal collective agreement until the average working week throughout the year consists of 48¾ hours only. The minor point of the unit of remuneration was gradually conceded by the men, and the Hour System, guarded by strict limitation of the working day, has come to be preferred by both parties.

[1] The letters were drawn up by Messrs. Frederic Harrison and Godfrey Lushington, after personal investigation and inquiry, and were signed also by Messrs. T. Hughes, J. M. Ludlow, E. S. Beesly, R. H. Hutton, R. B. Litchfield, and T. R Bennett. They appeared in July, 1861.

sent a deputation to the War Office. Sir George Cornwall Lewis returned at first an equivocal answer, but the new Trades Council proved the efficacy of Parliamentary agitation by getting questions put to the Minister in the House of Commons, and stirring up enough feeling to compel him to withdraw the troops.

The minute-books of the London Trades Council from 1860 to 1867 present a mirror of the Trade Union history of this period. Odger had the rare gift of making his minutes interesting, and he describes, in his terse but graphic English, all the varied events of the Labour Movement as they were brought before the Council. In 1861–2, for instance, we see the Council trying vainly to settle the difficult problem of "overlap" between the trades of the shipwrights and the iron-shipbuilders; we notice the shadow cast by the Lancashire cotton famine, and we read indignant resolutions condemning the Sheffield outrages of those years. But the special interest of these minutes lies in their unconscious revelation of the way in which the Council became the instrument of the new policy of participation in general politics. Under Odger's influence the Council took a prominent part in organising the popular welcome to Garibaldi, and in 1862 it held a great meeting in St. James's Hall in support of the struggle of the Northern States against negro slavery, at which John Bright was the principal speaker. In 1864 the Junta placed itself definitely in opposition to the "Old Unionists," who objected to all connection between the Government and the concerns of working men. Mr. Gladstone, who was then Chancellor of the Exchequer, had introduced a Bill enabling the Post Office to sell Government Annuities for small amounts. Against this harmless project George Potter, the leading opponent of the Junta, summoned great public meetings of the London trades, enlisted on his side the Operative Stonemasons and other provincial organisations, and vehemently denounced the Bill as an insidious attempt to divert the savings of working men from their Trade Unions and benefit

societies into an exchequer controlled by the governing classes. The London Trades Council sent an influential deputation to Mr. Gladstone publicly to disavow the action of Potter, and to welcome the proposal of the Government to utilise the administrative organisation for the advantage of the working class. Of more significance was the alteration of the Council's policy with regard to political reform. The early members had set themselves against the introduction of politics in any guise whatsoever, and during the years 1861–2 Howell and Odger strove in vain to enlist the Council in the agitation for a new Reform Bill. But in 1866, under the influence of Odger and Applegarth, Allan and Coulson, the Council enthusiastically threw itself into the demonstration in favour of the Reform Bill brought in by the Liberal Government, and took a leading part in the agitation which resulted in the enfranchisement of the town artisan.[1] In the same year the Council agreed to co-operate with the "International" in demanding Democratic Reform from all European Governments.

The widely advertised public action of the London Trades Council excited considerable interest in provincial centres of Trades Unionism. We see the Council in frequent correspondence with similar bodies at Glasgow, Nottingham, Sheffield, and other provincial towns, and often exercising a kind of informal leadership in general movements. But it would be unfair to ascribe the whole initiative in legislative reform to the London officials. Under the brilliant leadership of Alexander Macdonald, whose work we shall hereafter describe, the force of the coalminers was being marshalled for Parliamentary agitation; and Macdonald's friend, Alexander Campbell, was

[1] Many of the local Birmingham Trade Unions became directly affiliated to the National Reform League. But with the exception of two small clubs at Wolverhampton, and the West End Cabinet-makers (London), no other Trade Union appears to have joined the League in a corporate capacity, though its Council included Allan, Applegarth, Coulson, Cremer, Odger, Potter, and Conolly.

bringing the Glasgow Trades Council round to the new policy. And it was Campbell and Macdonald, working through these organisations, who carried through the most important Trade Union achievement of the next few years, the amendment of the law relating to master and servant.

It is difficult in these days, when equality of treatment before the law has become an axiom, to understand how the flagrant injustice of the old Master and Servant Acts seemed justifiable even to a middle-class Parliament. If an employer broke a contract of service, even wilfully and without excuse, he was liable only to be sued for damages, or, in the case of wages under £10, to be summoned before a court of summary jurisdiction, which could order payment of the amount due. The workman, on the other hand, who wilfully broke his contract of service, either by absenting himself from his employment, or by leaving his work, was liable to be proceeded against for a criminal offence, and punished by three months' imprisonment. This inequality of treatment was, moreover, aggravated by various other anomalies. It followed by the general law of evidence that, whilst a master sued by a servant could be witness in his own favour, the servant prosecuted by his employer could not give evidence on his own behalf; and it frequently happened that no other evidence than the employer's could be produced. It was in the power of a single justice of the peace, on an information on oath, to issue a warrant for the summary arrest of the workman, who thus found himself, when a dispute occurred, suddenly seized, even in his bed,[1] and

[1] The obligation to proceed by warrant was at first universal, as the Act of 1824, 4 Geo. IV. c. 34, gave the magistrate no discretion. By that act the master was to be served with a summons at the instance of the workman, whilst the workman was to be arrested on a warrant on the complaint upon oath of the master. But, in 1848, Jervis's Act, 11 and 12 Vic. c. 43, gave justices power in all cases to issue a summons in the first instance. The practice was accordingly gradually introduced in England of summoning the workman; and the issue of a warrant was in general confined to cases in which the

haled to prison at the discretion of a magistrate, who was in many cases himself an employer of labour. The case was heard before a single justice of the peace, and the hearing might take place at his private house. The only punishment that could be inflicted was imprisonment, the law not allowing the alternative of a fine or the payment of damages. From the decision of the justice, however arbitrary, there was no appeal. Finally, it must be added, the sentence of imprisonment was no discharge for a debt, so that a workman was liable to be imprisoned over and over again for the same breach of contract.[1]

workman had gone away, or had failed to appear to a summons. Jervis's Act, however, did not apply to Scotland, so that summary arrests of workmen on warrants continued until 1867; and this was one of the principal grievances adduced by the Glasgow representatives. Even in England warrants were occasionally granted by vindictive magistrates. In 1863 a dispute took place at a Durham colliery, and the employer proceeded against the miners under the Master and Servant Law. "In the middle of the next night twelve of them were taken out of their beds by the police and lodged in Durham lock-up, on the charge of deserting their work without notice" (Letter by Professor E. S. Beesly in *Spectator*, Dec. 12, 1863).

[1] See Question 864, Master and Servant Law Select Committee, 1866; Unwin *v.* Clarke, 1 Law Reports, Queen's Bench, p. 417; and Second Report of Labour Laws Commission, c. 1157 (1875), p. 7.

The enactments rendering the workman liable to imprisonment for simple breach of a contract of service are historically to be traced to the period when the law denied to the labourer the right to withhold his service, or to bargain as to his wages. Any neglect of abandonment of his work was, therefore, like a simple refusal to work at all, a breach, not so much of contract, as of a duty arising out of status and enforced by statute. The law on the subject dates, indeed, back to the celebrated Statute of Labourers of 1349 (23 Ed. III.), the primary object of which was to enforce service at the rates of hiring that existed prior to the Black Death. The second section of this law enacts that if a workman or servant depart from service before the time agreed upon he shall be imprisoned. The same principle was asserted in the Statute of Apprentices in 1563 (5 Eliz. c. 4), which consolidated the law relating to all artificers and labourers, and expressly applied it to workers by the piece, who were rendered liable to imprisonment if they left before completing their job. During the eighteenth century, which abounded, as we have seen, in enactments dealing with particular trades, a long series of statutes made the provisions of law more definite and stringent in the

Early in 1863 Alexander Campbell[1] brought the

industries in question. The principal English Acts were 7 Geo. I. st. 1, c. 13 (tailors); 9 Geo. I. c. 27 (shoemakers); 13 Geo. II. c. 8 (all leather trades); 20 Geo. II. c. 19; 27 Geo. II. c. 6; 31 Geo. II. c. 11 (various trades); 6 Geo. III. c. 25 (agreements for a term); 17 Geo. III. c. 56 (textiles, &c.); 39 & 40 Geo. III. c. 77 (coal and iron); 4 Geo. IV. c. 34 (all trades); 10 Geo. IV. c. 52 (general); 6 and 7 Vic. c. 40 (textiles).

The intolerable oppression which these laws enabled unscrupulous employers to commit was, at the beginning of the century, scarcely inferior to that brought about by the Combination Laws. This was strongly urged by the authors of *A few Remarks on the State of the Laws at present in existence for regulating Masters and Workpeople* (preserved among the Place MSS. 27804), which George White, the prompter of Peter Moore, M.P., published in 1823. The pieceworker clause of the Statute of Apprentices was particularly oppressive. "This clause," says White, "has been much abused, as in many businesses they never finish their work, as the nature of the employment is such that they are compelled to begin one before they finish another, as wheelwrights, japanners, and an infinite number of trades; therefore if any dispute ariseth respecting the amount of wages, and a strike or turn-out commences, or men leave their work, having words, the master prosecutes them for leaving their work unfinished. Very few prosecutions have been made to effect under the Combinations Acts, but hundreds have been made under this law, and the labourer or workman can never be free, unless this law is modified. The Combination Act is nothing: it is the law which regards the finishing of work which masters employ to harass and keep down the wages of their workpeople; unless this is modified nothing is done, and by repealing the Combination Acts you leave the workman in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred in the same state you found him—at the mercy of his master" (p. 51). But, in spite of this somewhat exaggerated protest, neither Place nor Hume took up the amendment of the law relating to contracts of service. Their paramount concern was to secure for the workman freedom to enter into a contract, and oppressive punishment for its breach attracted, for the moment, little attention.

Besides White's Manual, the following may be referred to for the history of the law, and of its amendment: *Report of Conference on the Law of Master and Workman under the Contract of Service* (Glasgow, 1864); the Reports of the Select Committee on the Law of Master and Servant, 1866, and of the Royal Commission on the Labour Laws, 1875; *The Labour Laws*, by James Edward Davis (London, 1875); and Stephen's *History of the Criminal Law*, vol. iii.

[1] Alexander Campbell, who had been a prominent disciple of Robert Owen, and whom we have already seen as secretary to the

Master and Servant Law under the notice of the Glasgow Trades Council. A Parliamentary Return was obtained showing that the enormous number of 10,339 cases of breach of contract of service came before the courts in a single year. A committee was formed to agitate for the amendment of the law, and communication was opened up, not only with the London leaders, but also with sympathisers in other provincial towns. The Trades Councils of London, Bristol, Sheffield, Nottingham, Newcastle, and Edinburgh were formally invited to unite in a combined movement. In Leeds and elsewhere local Trades Councils were established for the express purpose of forwarding the agitation; and 15,000 copies of a "Memorial of Information intended for the use of such workmen as fall under the provisions of the Statute 4 Geo. IV. c. 34," [1] were circulated to all the leading workmen throughout the country. At the instance of Campbell and Macdonald, the Glasgow Trades Council convened a conference of Trade Union representatives to consider how the object of the agitation could best be secured. This Conference, which was held in London during four days of May, 1864, marks an epoch in Trade Union history. For the first time a national meeting of Trade Union delegates was spontaneously convened by a Trade Union organisation, to discuss a purely workman's question, in the presence of working men alone. The number of delegates did not exceed twenty, but these included the leading officials of all the great national and amalgamated Unions.[2]

little Glasgow Carpenters' Union of 1834, was, in 1863, editing the *Glasgow Sentinel*, which became the chief organ of Macdonald, and his National Association of Miners. Campbell is described as having been, in 1858, the virtual founder of the Glasgow Trades Council.

[1] The Memorial, which contains an exact statement of the law, and suggestions for its amendment, is preserved in the *Flint Glass Makers' Magazine*, December, 1863.

[2] Among those present were Robert Applegarth, George Odger, Daniel Guile, T. J. Dunning, Alexander Macdonald, William Dronfield, Alexander Campbell, Edwin Coulson, and George Potter.

The transactions of the conference were thoroughly businesslike. Three members of the Government were asked to receive deputations; a large number of members of Parliament were "lobbied" on the subject of an immediate amending Bill; and finally a successful meeting of legislators was held in the "tea-room" of the House of Commons itself, at which the delegates impressed their desires upon all the friendly members. The terms of the draft bill were settled; Mr. Cobbett agreed to introduce it in the House of Commons, and the Glasgow Trades' Committee was authorised to support it by an agitation on behalf of all the Trade Unions of the kingdom.

The Bill introduced by Mr. Cobbett never became law; but a vigorous agitation kept the matter under the notice of Parliament, and in 1866 a Select Committee was appointed to inquire into the subject. Upon its report, Lord Elcho[1] succeeded, in 1867, in carrying through Parliament a Bill which remedied the grossest injustice of the law. The Master and Servant Act of 1867 (30 and 31 Vic. c. 141), the first positive success of the Trade Unions in the legislative field, did much to increase their confidence in Parliamentary agitation.

But whilst the Junta and their allies were, by the capture of the Trades Councils, using the Trade Union organisation for an active political campaign, their steady discouragement of aggressive strikes was bringing down upon them the wrath of the "Old Unionists" of the time. It was one of the principal functions of the London Trades Council to grant "credentials" to trade societies having disputes on hand, recommending them

The societies represented included the London Trades Council, Glasgow Trades Committee, Sheffield Association of Organised Trades, Liverpool United Trades Protection Society, Nottingham Association of Organised Trades, and the Northumberland and Durham United Trades and Labourers; the Amalgamated Societies of Engineers and Carpenters, the national societies of Bricklayers, Masons, Ironfounders, Miners, and Bookbinders, the London Society of Compositors, the Scottish Bakers, Sheffield Sawmakers, &c.

[1] Now Earl of Wemyss.

for the support of workmen in other trades. As these credentials were not confined to London disputes, the custom placed the Council under the invidious necessity of either giving its sanction to, or withholding approval from, practically every important strike in the kingdom—an arrangement which quickly brought the Council into conflict with the more aggressive societies. In two cases especially the divergence of policy raised discussions which threatened to destroy the new organisation. A building trades strike had broken out in the Midlands at the beginning of 1864, initiated by the old Friendly Society of Operative Carpenters. The men's action was strongly disapproved by Applegarth and the Executive of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters. The London Trades Council unhesitatingly took Applegarth's view, thereby alienating whole sections of the building trades, whose local trade clubs and provincial societies had retained much of the spirit of the Builders' Union of 1834. But the internal dissension arising from the carpenters' dispute fell far short of that brought about by the strike of the Staffordshire puddlers. It is unnecessary to go into the details of this angry struggle against a 10 per cent. reduction. The conduct of the men in refusing the arbitration offered by the Earl of Lichfield met with the disapproval of the London Trades Council. The hotter spirits were greatly incensed at the Council's moderation. George Potter, in particular, distinguished himself by addressing excited meetings of the men on strike, advising them to stand firm.

Potter, who figures largely in the newspapers of this time, was, in fact, endeavouring to work up a formidable opposition to the policy of the Junta. After the building trades disputes of 1859–60, in which he had taken a leading part, he had started the *Beehive*, a weekly organ of the Trade Union world. Himself a member of a tiny trade club of London carpenters, he was bitterly opposed to Applegarth and the Amalgamated Society, and, from 1864 onward, we find him at the head of

every outbreak of disaffection. An expert in the arts of agitation and of advertisement, Potter occasionally cut a remarkable figure, so that the unwary reader, not of the *Beehive* only, but also of the *Times*, might easily believe him to have been the most influential leader of the working-class movement. As a matter of fact, he at no time represented any genuine trade organisation, the "Working Men's Association," of which he was president, being a body of nondescript persons of no importance. However, from 1864 to 1867 we find him calling frequent meetings of delegates of the London trades to denounce the Junta, and their instrument, the London Trades Council. The minutes of the latter body contain abundant evidence of the bitter feelings caused by these attacks, and make clear the essential difference between the two policies. At a special meeting called to condemn Potter's action, Howell, Allan, Coulson, and Applegarth enlarged upon the evil consequences of irresponsible agitation in trade disputes; and Danter, the outspoken president of the Amalgamated Engineers, emphatically declared that Potter "had become the aider and abettor of strikes. He thought of nothing else; he followed no other business; strikes were his bread-and-cheese; in short, he was a strike-jobber, and he made the *Beehive* newspaper his instrument for pushing his nose into every unfortunate dispute that sprang up." [1]

Responsible and cautious leadership of the Trade Union Movement was becoming increasingly necessary. The growth of the great national Unions, alike in wealth and in membership, and the manner in which they subscribed in aid of each other's battles, had aroused the active enmity of the employers. To counteract the men's renewed strength, the employers once more banded themselves into powerful associations, and made use of a new weapon. The old expedient of the "document" had, since its failure to break down the Amalgamated Engineers in 1852, and to subdue the building operatives in

[1] Minutes of meeting of London Trades Council, March, 1864.

1859, fallen somewhat into discredit. It was now reinforced by the general "lock-out" of all the men in a particular industry, even those who accepted the employer's terms, in order to reduce to subjection the recalcitrant employees of one or two firms only.[1] The South Yorkshire coalowners especially distinguished themselves during those years by their frequent use of the "lock-out." One Yorkshire miner complained in 1866 that he had been "locked out about twenty-four months in six years."[2] During the year 1865 it seemed as if the lock-outs were about to become a feature of every large industry, the most notable instances being those of the Staffordshire ironworkers, to which we have already alluded, and the shipbuilding operatives on the Clyde. In both these cases large sections of the men were willing to work at the employers' terms, but were either known to belong to a Union, or suspected of contributing to the men on strike. But though this practice of "locking out" created great excitement among working men, it did not achieve the employers' aim of breaking up the Unions. Nothing but absolute suppression by law appeared open to those who regarded trade combinations as "a poisonous plant" and an "anomalous anachronism," and who were vainly looking to "the happy period," both for masters and men, when the questions, "What is the price of a quarter of wheat?" and "What is the price of a workman's day wage?" shall be settled on the same principles.[3]

Nor were the employers the only people who began to talk once more of putting down Trade Unions by law. The industrial dislocation which the lock-outs, far more than the strikes, produced, occasioned widespread loss and public inconvenience. The quarrels of employer

[1] The lock-out was not absolutely a new invention. Place describes its use by the master breeches-makers at the end of the last century.

[2] *Report of the Conference of Trade Delegates at Sheffield*, June, 1866, p. 22.

[3] "An Ironmaster's View of Strikes," by W. R. Hopper, *Fortnightly Review*, August 1, 1865.

and employed came to be vaguely regarded as matters of more than private concern. Unfortunately a handle was given to the enemies of Trade Unionism by the continuance of outrages, committed in the interest of Trade Unions, which began to be widely advertised by the press. Isolated cases of violence and intimidation, restricted, as we shall hereafter see, to certain trades and localities, were magnified, by press rumours, into a systematic attempt on the part of the Trade Unions generally to obtain their ends by deliberate physical violence. In the general fear and disapproval the public failed to discriminate between the petty trade clubs of Sheffield and such great associations as the Amalgamated Engineers and Carpenters. The commercial objection to industrial disputes became confused with the feeling of abhorrence created by the idea of vast combinations of men sticking at neither violence nor murder to achieve their ends. The "terrorism of Trade Unions" became a nightmare. "On one side," says a writer who represents the public feeling of the time, "is arrayed the great mass of the talent, knowledge, virtue, and wealth of the country, and, on the other, a number of unscrupulous men, leading a half idle life, and feeding on the contributions of their dupes, and on a tax levied on such of the intelligent artisans as are forced into their ranks, but who would be only too happy to throw off their thraldom and join the supporters of law and justice, did these but offer them adequate protection."[1]

The Trade Unions world seems to have been quite unconscious of the gathering storm. In June, 1866, 138 delegates, representing all the great Unions, and a total membership of about 200,000, met at Sheffield to devise some defence against the constant use of the lock-out. The student of the proceedings of this conference

[1] "Measures for Putting an End to the Abuses of Trades Unions," by Frederic Hill, Barrister-at-Law : paper in Sessional Proceedings of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science, 1867–8, p. 24. The popular middle-class sentiment is reflected in Charles Reade's novel, *Put Yourself in his Place* (London, 1871).

will contrast with wonder the actual conduct of the Trade Union leaders, with the denunciations to which these "few unscrupulous men" were at this time exposed. Nothing could be more worthy, even from the middle-class point of view, than the discussions of these representative workmen, who denounced with equal energy the readiness with which their impetuous followers came out on strike, and the arbitrary lock-out of the masters, and whose resolutions express their desire for the establishment of Councils of Conciliation and the general resort to arbitration in industrial disputes.[1] Meanwhile, in order to meet the great federations of employers, they formed "The United Kingdom Alliance of Organised Trades," to support the members of any trade who should find themselves "locked out" by their employers.[2] Unfortunately the conference utterly failed to decide what constituted a "lock-out," as distinguished from a strike; and the "Judicial Council" of the Alliance, consisting of one delegate from each of the nine districts into which the kingdom was divided, found itself continually at issue with its constituents as to the disputes to be supported. This friction co-operated with the increasing depression of trade in causing the calls for funds to be very unwillingly responded to; and the Executive Committee, sitting at Sheffield, had seldom any

[1] See, for instance, the speech of George Newton, the secretary of the Glasgow Trades Committee: "A great many strikes, and perhaps lock-outs too, have arisen from a stubborn refusal on the part of both sides to look the question honestly and fairly in the face. . . . Let us examine ourselves and see if there be any wicked way in us that contributes to this unsatisfactory state of things, and if we discover that we are not blameless, then we ought, first of all, to set our own house in order. . . . Then let us examine the opposite side of the camp and see how they stand, and if we find that they have not done all that they ought to have done with a view to prevent these serious evils, let us undisguisedly and in plain language point out where we consider they have erred, and by increasing public opinion in a healthy way against tyranny—some people call it, but perhaps a milder word would be better—against the unwise policy used, it will do much to repress it in future." (*Conference Report*, Sheffield, 1866.)

[2] Rules adopted at Manchester Conference, 1867 (Sheffield, 1867, 12 pp.).

cash at its command. The Alliance lingered on until about the end of 1870, when the defection of its last important Unions brought it absolutely to an end.[1] In 1866, however, the Alliance was young and hopeful. It received its first blow in October of this year, when it and the Trade Union Conference were forgotten in the sensation produced by the explosion of a can of gunpowder in a workman's house in New Hereford Street, Sheffield.

This outrage was only one of a class of crimes for which Sheffield was already notorious. But in the state of public irritation against Trade Unionism, which had been growing during the past few years of lock-outs and strikes, the news served to precipitate events. On all sides there arose a cry for a searching investigation into Trade Unionism. The Trade Unions themselves joined in the demand. As no clue to the perpetrators of the last crime could be discovered by the local police, the leaders of the Sheffield trade clubs united with the Town Council and the local

[1] The Alliance was always administered by an executive elected by the Sheffield trades, the leading men amongst which had been active in its formation. The veteran secretary of the Typographical Society, Mr. William Dronfield, was the first general secretary. Among the trades represented were the South Yorkshire and Nottingham Miners, the Amalgamated Tailors, Boilermakers, Cotton-spinners, Scottish Associated Carpenters, Yorkshire Glass-bottle Makers, North of England Ironworkers, and the trades of Wolverhampton. The minute books from 1867 to 1870, and its printed *Monthly Statement*, show that the Alliance at first supported numerous lock-outs, especially among the tailors, miners, and ironworkers, but that there were constant complaints of unpaid levies. Mr. Dronfield informed us that the Judicial Committee and the Executive experienced great difficulties from the absence of any control over the constituent Unions, and the impossibility of accurately defining a lock-out. The first conference of the Alliance was held at Manchester from the 1st to the 4th of January, 1867, when fifty-three trades had been enrolled, numbering 59,750 members. The "Rules" adopted at this conference contain an interesting address by Dronfield upon the principles and objects of the federation. The next conference was at Preston in September, 1867, when the membership had fallen to 23,580, in forty-seven trades, the Boilermakers, among others, formally withdrawing. (*Minutes of Conference at Preston*, Sheffield, 1867, 16 pp.)

Employers' Association in pressing for a Government inquiry. The London Trades Council and the Executive of the Amalgamated Engineers sent a joint deputation to Sheffield to investigate the case. The deputation discovered no more than the local police had done about the perpetrators of the crime, and therefore innocently reported that there was no evidence of Trade Union complicity; but they accompanied this report by a strong condemnation of "the abominable practice of rattening, which is calculated to demoralise those who are concerned in it, and to bring disgrace on all trade combinations."[1] Public meetings of Trade Unionists were held throughout the country, at which the leaders expressed their indignation both at the outrage itself and at the common assumption that it was a usual and necessary incident of Trade Unionism. These meetings invariably concluded with a demand on behalf

[1] The town of Sheffield had long been noted for the custom of "rattening," that is, the temporary abstraction of the wheelbands or tools of a workman whose subscription to his club was in arrear. This had become the recognised method of enforcing, not merely the payment of contributions, but also compliance with the trade regulations of the club. The lawless summary jurisdiction thus usurped by the Sheffield clubs easily passed into more serious acts of lynch law if mere rattening proved ineffectual. Recalcitrant workmen were terrorised by explosions of cans of gunpowder in the troughs of their grinding wheels, or thrown down their chimneys; and in some cases these explosions caused serious injury. The various grinders' Unions (saw, file, sickle, fork, and fender) enjoyed an unhappy notoriety for outrages of this nature, which had, from time to time, aroused the spasmodic indignation of the local press. An attempt, in 1861, to blow up a small warehouse in Acorn Street provoked a special outburst of public disapproval; and the minutes of the London Trades Council record that already on this occasion the Council publicly expressed its abhorrence of such criminal violence. After this date there was for three or four years a diminution in the number of serious acts of violence committed; but the years 1865–6 saw a renewal of the evil practices, especially in connection with the Saw-Grinders' Union. The explosion in New Hereford Street in October, 1866, was afterwards proved to have been instigated by this Union in order to terrorise a certain Thomas Fernehough, who had twice deserted the society, and was at the time working for a firm against whom the saw-handle makers, as well as the saw-grinders, had struck.

of the Trade Unionists to be allowed an opportunity of refuting the accusations of the enemies of the movement. The appointment of a Royal Commission of Inquiry was officially announced in the Queen's Speech of February, 1867. That the Government meant business was proved by the prompt introduction of a Bill empowering the Commission to pursue its investigations by exceptional means. The inquiry was to extend to all outrages during the past ten years, whether in Sheffield or elsewhere. Not only were accomplices in criminal acts promised an indemnity, provided that they gave evidence, but the same privilege was extended to the actual perpetrators of the crimes. The investigation, moreover, was not restricted to the supposed criminal practices of particular trade clubs, but was to embrace the whole subject of Trade Unionism and its effects.

The Trade Union Movement thus found itself for the third time at the bar of a Parliamentary inquiry at a moment when public opinion, as well as the enmity of employers, had been strongly excited against it. At the very height of this crisis, which had been brought about by the violence of some of the old-fashioned Unions, the new Amalgamated Societies themselves received a serious check from a decision of the Court of Queen's Bench.

The formation of the Amalgamated Engineers, with its large accumulated funds, had renewed the anxiety of the Trade Union officials as to the extent to which a trade society enjoyed the protection of the law. Although the Act of 1825 had made trade societies, as such, no longer unlawful, nothing had been done to give them any legal status, or to enable them to take proceedings as corporate entities. But in 1855 a "Metropolitan Trades Committee" succeeded in getting a clause intended to relate to Trade Unions inserted in the Friendly Societies Act of that year. By the 44th section of this Act it was provided that a society established for any purpose not illegal, might, by depositing its rules with the Registrar of Friendly Societies, enjoy the privilege of having disputes

among its own members summarily dealt with by the magistrates. Under this provision several of the larger societies had deposited their rüles, believing, with the concurrence of the Registrar, that this secured to them the power to proceed summarily against any member who should, in his capacity of secretary or treasurer, detain or make away with the society's funds.[1] So thoroughly had the legality of their position been accepted by all concerned, that on the establishment by Mr. Gladstone of the Post Office Savings Banks in 1861, he had, at the request of the Trade Union leaders, expressly conceded to the Unions, equally with the Friendly Societies, the privilege of making use of the new banks.

This feeling of security was, in 1867, completely shattered. The Boilermakers' Society had occasion to proceed against the treasurer of their Bradford branch for wrongfully withholding the sum of £24; but the magistrates, to the general surprise of all concerned, held that the society could not proceed under the Friendly Societies Act, being, as a Trade Union, outside the scope of that measure. The case was thereupon carried to the Court of Queen's Bench, where four judges, headed by the Lord Chief Justice, confirmed the decision, giving the additional reason that the objects of the Union, if not, since 1825, actually criminal, were yet so far in restraint of trade as to render the society an illegal association. Thus the officers of the great national Trade Unions found their societies deprived of the legal status which they imagined they had acquired, and saw themselves once more destitute of any legal protection for their accumulated funds.

The grounds of the decision went a great deal further than the decision itself. As was pointed out by Mr. Frederic Harrison, "the judgment lays down not merely that certain societies have failed to bring them-

[1] Among other societies, the Amalgamated Engineers and Carpenters and the national Unions of Boilermakers and Ironfounders appear to have deposited their rules.

selves within the letter of a certain Act, but that Trade Unions, of whatever sort, are in their nature contrary to public policy, and that their object in itself will vitiate every association and every transaction into which it enters. . . . In a word, Unionism becomes (if not according to the suggestion of the learned judge—criminal) at any rate something like betting and gambling, public nuisances and immoral considerations—things condemned and suppressed by the law." [1]

Trade Unionism was now at bay, assailed on both sides. It was easy to foresee that the employers and their allies would make a determined attempt to use the Royal Commission and the Sheffield outrages to suppress Trade Unionism by the criminal law. On the other hand, the hard-earned accumulations of the larger societies, by this time amounting to an aggregate of over a quarter of a million sterling, were at the mercy of their whole army of branch secretaries and treasurers, any one of whom might embezzle the funds with impunity.

The crisis was too serious to be dealt with by the excited delegate meetings of the London Trades Council. For over four years we hear of only occasional and purely formal meetings of this body. Immediately on the publication of the decision of the judges in January, 1867, Applegarth convened what was called a "Conference of Amalgamated Trades," but what consisted in reality of weekly private meetings of the five leaders, and a few other friends. From 1867 to 1871 this "conference" acted as the effective cabinet of the Trade Union Movement. Its private minute-book, kept by Applegarth, reveals to the student the whole political life of the Trade Union world.

The first action of the Junta was to call to their councils those middle-class allies upon whose assistance and advice they had learned to rely. We have already noticed the adhesion of the "Christian Socialists" to the Amalgamated Engineers in 1852, and the intervention of

[1] *Beehive*, January 26, 1867.

the Positivists in the Building Trades disputes of 1859–61. Mr. Frederic Harrison and Professor E. S. Beesly were now rendering specially valuable services as the apologists for Trade Unionism in the public press. "Tom Hughes" was in Parliament, almost the only spokesman of the men's whole claim. Mr. Henry Crompton was bringing his acute judgment and his detailed experience of the actual working of the law to bear upon the dangers which beset the Unions in the Courts of Justice. Applegarth's minutes show how frequently all four were ready to spend hours in private conference at the Engineers' office in Stamford Street, and how unreservedly they, in this crisis, placed their professional skill at the disposal of the Trade Union leaders. It would be difficult to exaggerate the zeal and patient devotion of these friends of Trade Unionism, or the service which they rendered to the cause in its hour of trial.[1]

It is obvious from the private transactions of the conference that the main object of the Junta was to gain for Trade Unionism that legal status which was necessary alike to the security of the funds and to the recognition of the Trade Union organisation as a constituent part of the State. But the first thing to be done was to defeat the employers in their endeavour to use the Royal Commission as an instrument for suppressing Trade Unionism by direct penal enactment. The Junta had therefore not only to dissociate themselves from the ignorant turbulence of the old-fashioned Unions, but also to prove that the bulk of their own members were enlightened and respectable. It was, moreover, of the utmost importance to persuade the public that the Junta and their friends, not the strike-jobbers or the outrage-mongers, were the authorised and

[1] Along with these, in helping and advising the Trade Unions at this time, were Mr. Vernon Lushington, Mr. Godfrey Lushington (now Permanent Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department), Mr. J. M. Ludlow (afterwards Registrar of Friendly Societies), Mr. Neate (formerly Professor of Political Economy and then M.P. for Oxford), Sir T. Fowell Buxton, M.P., and Mr. (now the Right Hon.) A. J. Mundella.

typical representatives of the Trade Union Movement. All this it was necessary to bring out in the inquiry by the Royal Commission before which Trade Unionism was presently to stand on its defence. The composition of the Commission was accordingly a matter of the greatest concern for the Junta. The Government had resolved to select, as Commissioners, not representatives of each view, but persons presumably impartial, with Sir William Erle, who had lately retired from the Lord Chief Justiceship of the Common Pleas, as their chairman. In this arrangement representatives of the employers were to be excluded; and the appointment of working men was not dreamed of. The Commission was to be made up chiefly from the ranks of high officials, with four members from the two Houses of Parliament, and the chairman of a great industrial undertaking. The active part which Mr. Thomas Hughes had taken in the debates secured him a seat on the Commission, though he felt that single-handed he could do little for his friends. All possible pressure was accordingly brought to bear on the Government with a view to the appointment of a Trade Unionist member; but the idea of a working man Royal Commissioner was inconsistent with official traditions. The utmost that could be obtained was that the workmen and the employers should each suggest a special representative to be added. For the workmen a wise and extremely fortunate choice was made in the person of Mr. Frederic Harrison, the Junta obtaining also permission for representative Trade Unionists to be present during the examination of the witnesses.[1]

[1] The Junta did not, however, confine its efforts to action before the Commission. One of the taunts constantly thrown by the press at the Trade Union leaders, was that they did not themselves know what they wanted. Partly as a reply to this, but also as a manifesto to consolidate the Unionist forces, in the autumn of 1867 a Bill was prepared by Mr. Henry Crompton and laid before the Junta, and after considerable discussion adopted by them and by a delegate meeting of Trades held at the Bell Inn. It was introduced into the House of Commons early in the following session, and served as basis of the Trade Union demand at some of the elections in 1868, notably that of Sheffield when Mr. Mundella first was candidate.

The actual conduct of the Trade Unionist case was undertaken by Messrs. Harrison and Hughes, in consultation with Applegarth, whom the Junta deputed to attend the sittings on their behalf. The ground of defence was chosen with considerable shrewdness. The policy of the Junta and their allies was to focus the attention of the Commissioners upon the great trade friendly societies in contradistinction to the innumerable little local trade clubs of the old type. The evidence of Applegarth, who was the first witness examined, did much to dispel the grosser prejudices against the Unions. The General Secretary of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters was able to show that his society, then standing third in financial magnitude in the Trade Union world, far from fomenting strikes, was mainly occupied in the work of an insurance company. He was in a position to lay effective stress on the total absence of secrecy or coercion in its proceedings. He disclaimed, on behalf of its members, all objection to machinery, foreign imports, piecework, overtime, or the free employment of apprentices. The fundamental position upon which he entrenched his Trade Unionism was the maintenance, at all hazards, of the Standard Rate of Wages and the Standard Hours of Labour, to be secured by the accumulation of such a fund as would enable every member of the Union effectually to set a reserve-price on his labour. William Allan, who came up on the third day, followed Applegarth's lead, though with some reservations; and the evidence of these two officers of what were primarily national friendly societies made a marked impression on the Commission.

The employers were not as well served as the men. It is true that they succeeded, in spite of Applegarth's disclaimers, in persuading the Commission that some of the most powerful Unions strenuously objected to piecework and sub-contract in any form whatsoever, and in some instances even to machinery. In other cases it was proved that attempts were made to enforce a rigid limitation of apprentices. Owing to the energy of the Central

Association of Master Builders, the restrictive policy of the older Unions in the building trades was brought well to the front; and this fact accounts, even to-day, for most of the current impression of Trade Unionism among the middle and upper classes. But the employers did not discriminate in their attack. Almost with one accord they objected to the whole principle of Trade Unionism. They reiterated with a curious impenetrability the old argument of the "individual bargain," and protested against any kind of industrial organisation on the part of their employees. All attempts by the men to claim collectively any share in regulating the conditions of labour were denounced as "unwarrantable encroachments on their rights as employers." The number of apprentices, like indeed the whole administration of industry, was claimed as of private concern, the settlement of which "exclusively belongs to the employer himself; a matter in which no other party, much less the operatives, have got anything to do." And they objected even more to the centrally administered national society with extensive reserve funds than to the isolated local clubs whose spasmodic outbursts they could afford to disregard. But the confusion between the small local bodies with their narrow policy of outrage and violence, and the amalgamated societies with their far-reaching power and accumulated wealth, effective as it had been in alarming the public, proved disastrous to the employers when their case was subjected to the acute cross-examination of Mr. Frederic Harrison. The masters, by directing their attack mainly on the great Amalgamated Societies and the newly-formed local Trades Councils, played, in fact, directly into the hands of the Junta. It was easy for Allan and Applegarth to show that the influence of central Executive Councils and the formation of a public opinion among trade societies, tended to restrain the more aggressive action of men embittered by a local quarrel. The combination of friendly benefits with trade objects was destined to be hotly attacked twenty years later by the more ardent

spirits in the Trade Union world, as leading to inertia and supineness in respect of wages, hours and conditions of labour. The evidence adduced in 1867–8, read in the light of later events, reveals that this tendency had already begun ; and it was impossible for the Commissioners to resist the conclusion that they had, in the Amalgamated Engineers and Carpenters, types of a far less aggressive Trade Unionism than such survivals as the purely trade societies of the brickmakers or the Sheffield industries.

Foiled in this attempt the employers fell back upon an indictment of the Amalgamated Unions considered as friendly societies. The leading actuaries were called to prove that neither the Amalgamated Engineers nor the Amalgamated Carpenters could possibly meet their accumulating liabilities, and that these must, in a few years, inevitably bring both societies to bankruptcy. The whole of this evidence is a striking instance of the untrustworthiness of expert witnesses off their own ground. Neither Mr. Finlaison nor Mr. Tucker ever realised that a Trade Union, unlike a Friendly Society, possesses and constantly exercises an unlimited power to raise funds by special levies, or by increased contributions, whenever it may seem good to the majority of the members. But even had the actuarial indictment been completely warranted, it was a mistake in tactics on the part of the employers. The Commissioners found themselves shunted into an inquiry, not into the results of Trade Unionism upon the common weal, but into the arithmetical soundness of the financial arrangements which particular groups of workmen chose to make among themselves.

Meanwhile the primary business of the Commission, the investigation into the Sheffield outrages, had been remitted to special "examiners," whose local inquiry attracted far less attention than the proceedings of the main body. At first the investigation elicited little that was new ; but in June, 1867, the country was startled by dramatic confessions on the part of Broadhead and other members of the grinders' trade clubs, unravelling a series

of savage crimes instigated by them, and paid for out of Club funds. For a short time it looked as if all the vague accusations hurled at Trade Unionism at large were about to be justified; but the examiners reported that four-fifths of the societies even of the Sheffield trades were free from outrages, and that these had been most prevalent in 1859, and had since declined. The only other place in which the Commissioners thought it necessary to make inquiry into outrages was Manchester, where the Brickmakers' Union had committed many crimes, but where no complicity on the part of other trades was shown. It was made evident to all candid students that these criminal acts were not chargeable to Trade Unionism as a whole. They represented, in fact, the survival among such rough and isolated trades as the brickmakers and grinders of the barbarous usages of a time when working men felt themselves outside the law, and oppressed by tyranny.[1]

The success with which the case of the Trade Unionists had been presented to the Commission was reflected in a changed attitude on the part of the governing class, a change expressly attributed to the "greater knowledge and wider experience" of Trade Unions which had been gained through the Royal Commission. "True statesmanship," declared the *Times*, "will seek neither to augment nor to reduce their influence, but, accepting it as a fact, will give it free scope for legitimate development."[2]

[1] The Broadhead disclosures created a great stir, and Professor Beesly, who had ventured to point out "that a trades union murder was neither better nor worse than any other murder," was denounced as an apologist for crime, and nearly lost his professorship at University College, London, for his sturdy defence of the principle of Trade Unionism. See his pamphlet, *The Sheffield Outrages and the Meeting at Exeter Hall* (London, 1867, 16 pp.); and that by Mr. Richard Congreve, *Mr. Broadhead and the Anonymous Press* (London, 1867, 16 pp.).

[2] *Times* leader, July 8, 1869. The occasion was the epoch-marking speech of Mr. (now Lord) Brassey, in which, speaking as the son of a great contractor, he declared himself on the side of the Trade Unions, and asserted that, by exercising a beneficial influence on the

Thus the official report of the Commission, from which the enemies of Trade Unionism had hoped so much, contained no recommendation which would have made the position of any single Union worse than it was before. An inconclusive and somewhat inconsistent document, it argued that trade combination could be of no real economic advantage to the workman, but nevertheless recommended the legalisation of the Unions under certain conditions. Whereas the Act of 1825 had excepted from the common illegality only combinations in respect of wages or hours of labour, the Commissioners recommended that no combination should henceforth be liable to prosecution for restraint of trade, except those formed "to do acts which involved breach of contract," and to refuse to work with any particular person. But the privilege of registration, carrying with it the power to obtain legal protection for the society's funds, was to be conferred only on Unions whose rules were free from certain restrictive clauses, such as the limitation of apprentices or of the use of machinery, and the prohibition of piecework and sub-contract. The employers' influence on the Commission was further shown in a special refusal of the privilege of registration to societies whose rules authorised the support of the disputes of other trades.

So far the result of the Commission was purely negative. No hostile legislation was even suggested. On the other hand, it was obvious that no Trade Union would accept "legalisation" on the proposed conditions. But Messrs. Harrison and Hughes had not restricted themselves to casting out all dangerous proposals from the majority report. Their minority report, which was signed also by the Earl of Lichfield, exposed in terse paragraphs the futility of the suggestions made by the

character of the workmen, they tended to lower rather than to raise the cost of labour (Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, July 7, 1869). The speech was afterwards republished, with some additions, under the title of *Trade Unions and the Cost of Labour*, by T. Brassey (London, 1870, 64 pp.).

majority, and laid down in general terms the principles upon which all future legislation should proceed. It advocated the removal of all special legislation relating to labour contracts, on the principle, first, that no act should be illegal if committed by a workman unless it was equally illegal if committed by any other person; and secondly, that no act by a combination of men should be regarded as criminal if it would not have been criminal in a single person. To this was appended a detailed statement, drafted by Mr. Frederic Harrison, in which the character and objects of Trade Unionism, as revealed in the voluminous evidence taken by the Commission, were explained and defended with consummate skill. What was perhaps of even greater service to the Trade Union world was a precise and detailed exposition of the various amendments required to bring the law into accordance with the general principles referred to. We have here a striking instance of the advantage to a Labour Movement of expert professional advice. The Junta had been demanding the complete legalisation of their Unions in the same manner as ordinary Friendly Societies. They had failed to realise that such a legalisation would have exposed the Amalgamated Society of Engineers to be sued by any one of its members who might be excluded for "blacklegging," or otherwise working contrary to the interests of the trade. The whole efficacy, from a Trade Union point of view, of the amalgamation of trade and friendly benefits would have been destroyed. The bare legalisation would have brought the Trades Unions under the general law, and subjected them to constant and harassing interference by Courts of Justice. They had grown up in despite of the law and the lawyers; which as regards the spirit of the one and the prejudices of the other were, and still are, alien and hostile to the purposes and collective action of the Trades Societies. The danger of any member having power to take legal proceedings, to worry them by litigation and cripple them by legal expenses, or to bring a society within the scope of the

insolvency and bankruptcy law, became very apparent. The Junta easily realised, when their advisers explained the position, that mere legalisation would place the most formidable weapon in the hands of unscrupulous employers. To avoid this difficulty Mr. Harrison proposed the ingenious plan of bringing the Trade Union under the Friendly Societies Acts, so far as regards the protection of its funds against theft or fraud, whilst retaining to the full the exceptional legal privilege of being incapable of being sued or otherwise proceeded against as a corporate entity. Had a Trade Union official been selected as the sole representative of the Unions on the Commission, such detailed and ingenious amendments of the law would not have been devised and made part of an authoritative official report. The complete charter of Trade Union liberty, which Mr. Harrison and his friends had elaborated, became for seven years the political programme of the Trade Unionists. And it is a part of the curious irony of English party politics that, whilst the formation of this programme, and the agitation by which it was pressed on successive Parliaments, were both of them exclusively the work of a group of Radicals, it was, as we shall see, a Conservative Cabinet which eventually passed it into law.[1]

[1] The Sheffield Outrages and the Royal Commission produced a large crop of literature, most of which is of little value. The Commission itself presented no fewer than eleven reports, with voluminous evidence and appendices. The Examiners appointed to investigate the outrages at Sheffield and Manchester presented separate reports, which were laid before Parliament. The mass of detailed information about strikes and other proceedings of Trade Societies contained in these reports has been the main source of all subsequent writings on the subject. *The Trade Unions of England*, by the Comte de Paris (London, 1869, 246 pp.), and *The Trade Unions*, by Robert Somers (Edinburgh, 1876, 232 pp.), are, for instance, little better than summaries, the former friendly, the latter unfriendly, of the evidence before the Commission. The chapters relating to Trade Unionism in W. T. Thornton's work *On Labour* (London, 1870), which made so permanent an impression on the economic world, are entirely based upon the same testimony. Among other publications may be mentioned *Trades Unions Defended*, by W. R. Callender (Manchester, 1870, 16 pp.); and *Measures for Putting an End to the Abuses of Trades Unions*, by Frederic Hill (London, 1868, 16 pp.).

The effective though informal leadership of the movement which the Junta had assumed during the sittings of the Royal Commission had not gone entirely unquestioned. Those who are interested in the cross-currents of personal intrigues and jealousies which detract from the force of popular movements, can read in the pages of the *Beehive* full accounts of the machinations of George Potter. The *Beehive* summoned a Trade Union Conference at St. Martin's Hall in March, 1867, which was attended by over one hundred delegates from provincial societies, Trades Councils, and the minor London clubs.[1] The Junta, perhaps rather unwisely, refused to have anything to do with a meeting held under Potter's auspices. But many of their provincial allies came up without any suspicion of the sectional character of the conference, and found themselves in the anomalous position of countenancing what was really an attempt to seduce the London Trades from their allegiance to the Junta and the London Trades Council. The Conference sat for four days, and made, owing to Potter's energy, no little stir. A committee was appointed to conduct the Trade Union case before the Commission, and Conolly, the President of the Operative Stonemasons, was deputed to attend the sittings. But although special prominence was given by the *Beehive* to all the proceedings of this committee, we have failed to discover with what it actually concerned itself. An indiscreet speech by Conolly quickly led to his exclusion from the sittings of the Commission; and the management of the Trade Union case remained in the hands of Applegarth and the Junta.

Apart, however, from jealousy and personal intrigue, there was some genuine opposition to the policy of the Junta. The great mass of Trade Unionists were not yet converted to the necessity of obtaining for their societies a recognised legal status. There were even many experienced officials, especially in the provincial organisations of the older type, who deprecated the action that was

[1] *Report of the Trades Conference* (London, 1867, 32 pp.).

being taken by the London leaders, on the express ground that they objected to legalisation. "The less working men have to do with the law in any shape the better," was the constant note of the Old Unionists. This view found abundant expression at the Congresses convened in 1868 by the Manchester Trades Council, and in 1869 by that of Birmingham. But in spite of the absence of the Junta from the Manchester Congress, their friend, John Kane, of the North of England Ironworkers' Association, succeeded in inducing the delegates to pass a resolution expressing full confidence in the policy and action of the Conference of Amalgamated Trades.[1] And at the Congress of 1869, Messrs. Odger and Howell, as representatives of the Junta, managed to get adopted a series of resolutions embodying Mr. Frederic Harrison's proposals.[2]

Meanwhile a change had come over the political situation. At the outset of the crisis Mr. Frederic Harrison had urged upon the Trade Union world the necessity of turning to the polling booth for redress. "Nothing," he writes in January, 1867, "will force the governing classes to recognise [the workmen's] claims and judge them fairly, until they find them wresting into their own hands real political power. Unionists who, till now, have been content with their Unions, and have shrunk from political action, may see the pass to which this abstinence from political movements has brought them."[3] Within a few months of this advice the Reform Bill of 1867 had enfranchised the working man in the boroughs. The Trade Union leaders were not slow to use the advantage thus given to them. The Junta, under the convenient cloak of the Conference of Amalgamated Trades, issued, in July, 1868, a circular urging upon Trade Unionists the importance of registering their names as electors, and of pressing on every candidate the question in which they were primarily interested. The Trades Councils throughout the country followed suit; and we find the Junta's

[1] *Beehive*, June 13, 1868. [2] Ibid. August 28, 1869.
[3] Ibid. January 26, 1867.

electoral tactics adopted even by societies which were traditionally opposed to all political action. The Central Committee of the Stonemasons, for instance, strongly urged their members to vote at the ensuing election only for candidates who would support Trade Union demands.[1]

By the beginning of 1869 Mr. Frederic Harrison had drafted a comprehensive Bill, embodying all the legislative proposals of his minority report. This was introduced by Messrs. Mundella and Hughes, and although its provisions were received with denunciations by the employers,[2] it gained some support among the newly-elected members, and was strongly backed up outside the House. The Liberal Government of that day and nearly all the members of the House of Commons were still covertly hostile to the very principles of Trade Unionism, and every attempt was made to burke the measure.[3] But the Junta were determined to make felt their new political power. From every part of the country pressure was put upon members of Parliament. A great demonstration of workmen was held at Exeter Hall, at which Messrs. Mundella and Hughes declared their intention of forcing the House and the Ministry to vote upon the hated measure. Finding evasion no longer possible, the Government abandoned its attitude of hostility and agreed to a formal second reading, upon the understanding that the Cabinet would next year bring in a Bill of its own. A provisional measure giving temporary protection to Trade Union funds was accordingly hurried through Parliament

[1] *Fortnightly Circular*, June, 1868.

[2] See, for instance, *Some opinions on Trade Unions and the Bill of* 1869, by Edmund Potter, M.P. (London, 1869, 45 pp.); also the *Observations upon the Law Combinations and Trades Unions, and upon the Trades Unions Bill*, by a Barrister (London, 1869, 64 pp.).

[3] In his *Letters to the Working Classes* (London, 1870), Professor Beesly gives a graphic account of the shuffling of the Government, and advises political action. The annual report of the General Union of House Painters (the "Manchester Alliance") for 1871 shows how eagerly the advice was received: "Away with the cry of no politics in our Unions; this foolish neutrality has left us without power or influence."

at the end of the session pending the introduction of a complete Bill.[1] The Junta had gained the first victory of their political campaign.

The next session found the Government reluctant to fulfil its promise in the matter. But the Trade Unionists were not disposed to let the question sleep, and after much pressure Mr. Bruce (now Lord Aberdare), who was then Home Secretary, produced, in 1871, a Bill which was eagerly scanned by the Trade Union world. The Government proposed to concede all the points on which it had been specially pressed by the Junta. No Trade Union, however wide its objects, was henceforth to be

[1] 32 and 33 Vic. c. 61 (1869). This provisional measure was bitterly opposed in the House of Lords by Earl Cairns, who argued that its universal protection of the funds of all Unions alike, without requiring the abandonment of their objectionable rules, was in direct opposition to the majority report of the Royal Commission. No such surrender to the Trade Unions was, in his opinion, necessary, as their funds had, in the previous year, been incidentally protected by an "Act to amend the law relating to larceny and embezzlement" (31 and 32 Vic. c. 116), passed at the instance of Russell Gurney, the Recorder of London. This act had no reference to Trade Unions as such, but it enabled members of a co-partnership to be convicted for stealing or embezzling the funds of their co-partnership. Its possible application to defaulting Trade Union officials was perceived by Messrs. Shaen, Roscoe & Co., who have for two generations acted as solicitors for several of the leading Unions. At their instance a case was submitted to the Attorney-General of the time (Sir John Karslake), who advised that a Trade Union could now prosecute in its character of a partnership. Criminal proceedings were accordingly taken by the Operative Bricklayers' Society against a defaulting officer who had set the Executive at defiance, with the result that the prisoner was, in December, 1868, sentenced to six months' hard labour. This successful prosecution was widely advertised throughout the Trade Union world, and was frequently quoted as showing that no further legislation was needed. But, as was forcibly pointed out by Mr. Frederic Harrison and other advisers of the Junta, Russell Gurney's Act, though it enabled Trades Unions to put defaulting officials in prison, gave them no power to recover the sums due, or to take any civil proceedings whatever, and did not remove the illegality of any combinations of workmen "in restraint of trade." See Mr. Harrison's article, "The Trades Union Bill," in *Fortnightly Review*, July 1, 1869, and the leaflet published by the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, on Russell Gurney's Act, December, 1868.

illegal merely because it was "in restraint of trade." Every Union was to be entitled to be registered, if its rules were not expressly in contravention of the criminal law. And, finally, the registration which gave the Unions complete protection for their funds was so devised as to leave untouched their internal organisation and arrangements, and to prevent their being sued or proceeded against in a court of law.

The employers vehemently attacked the Government for conceding, as they said, practically all the Trade Union demands.[1] But from the men's point of view this "complete charter legalising Unions" had a serious drawback. The Bill, as was complained, "while repealing the Combination Laws, substituted another penal law against workmen" as such. A lengthy clause provided that any violence, threat, or molestation for the purpose of coercing either employers or employed should be severely punished. All the terms of the old Combination Laws, "molest," "obstruct," "threaten," "intimidate," and so forth, were used without any definition or limitation, and picketing, moreover, was expressly included in molestation or obstruction by a comprehensive prohibition of "persistently following" any person, or "watching or besetting" the premises in which he was, or the approach to such premises. The Act of 1859, which had expressly legalised peaceful persuasion to join legal combinations, was repealed.[2] It seemed only too probable that the Govern-

[1] See, for instance, the report of the Leeds meeting of the Master Builders' Association to object to the Bill, *Beehive*, March 11, 1871.

[2] A short Act had been passed in 1859 (22 Vic. c. 34) which excluded from the definition of "molestation" or "obstruction" the mere agreement to obtain an alteration of wages or hours, and also the peaceful persuasion of others without threat or intimidation to cease or abstain from work in order to obtain the wages or hours aimed at. The Act was passed without discussion or comment, probably with reference to some recent judicial decisions, but its actual origin is not clear. The Stonemasons' Society refused to have anything to do with it, and referred sneeringly to its promoters as busybodies. Alexander Macdonald alluded to it in his speech on the Employers and Workmen Bill on June 28, 1875 (Hansard, vol. 225,

ment measure would make it a criminal offence for two Trade Unionists to stand quietly in the street opposite the works of an employer against whom they had struck, in order to peacefully communicate the fact of the strike to any workmen who might be ignorant of it.

It does not appear that Mr. Bruce's fiercely resented "Third Clause" was intended to effect any alteration in the law. Its comprehensive prohibition of violence, threats, intimidation, molestation, and obstruction did no more than sum up and codify the various judicial decisions of past years under which the Trade Unionists had suffered. But the law had hitherto been obscure and conflicting; both the statutes and the judicial decisions had proceeded largely from a presumption against the very existence of Trade Unionism which was now passing away; and the workmen and their advisers not unreasonably feared the consequences of an explicit re-enactment of provisions which practically made criminal all the usual methods of trade combination. A recent decision had brought

pp. 66–7), as having been enacted at the instance of himself and others in order to permit men to persuade others to join combinations, and that it had had a most beneficial effect. An obscure pamphlet, entitled *Letters to the Trades Unionists and the Working Classes*, by Charles Sturgeon (London, 1868, 8 pp.), gives the only account of its origin that we have seen. "Some of the judges had decided that the liberty to combine was only during the period he was not in the employ of any master (*i.e.*, while on the tramp). So obvious a misreading, under which the working men were getting imprisoned, while their masters combined at their pleasure, created numerous petitions for relief, which lay as usual on the table; however, the Executive of the National Association of United Trades assembled in my rooms in Abingdon Street, and we drew a little Bill of nine lines in length to explain to the judges how they had failed to explain the views of the legislator. . . . I introduced our friends to the late Henry Drummond, Thomas Duncombe, and Joseph Hume, two Radicals and an honest Tory, and, strange to say, they worked well together when in pursuit of justice. After fighting hard against the great Liberal Party for four or five years, we passed our little Bill (22 Vic. c. 34), to the great joy of the working classes and chagrin of the Manchester Radicals." But the decision of the R. *v.* Druitt and R. *v.* Bailey in 1867 showed that it did not serve to protect pickets from prosecution.

the danger home to the minds of the Trade Union leaders and their legal friends. In July, 1867, a great strike had broken out among the London tailors, in which the masters' shops had been carefully "picketed."[1] Druitt, Shorrocks, and other officers of the Union were thereupon indicted, not for personal violence or actual molestation, but for the vague crime of conspiracy. The Judge (Baron, afterwards Lord, Bramwell) held that pickets, if acting in combination, were guilty of "molestation" if they gave annoyance only by black looks, or even by their presence in large numbers, without any acts or gestures of violence, and that if two or more persons combined to do anything unpleasant and annoying to another person they were

[1] Mr. Henry Crompton gives the following account of the practice of picketing:—"Picketing is generally much misunderstood. It occurs in a strike when war has begun. The struggle, of course, consists in the employer trying to get fresh men, and the men on strike trying to prevent this. They naturally do their best to induce all others to join them. Very often the country is scoured by the employers, and men brought long distances who never would have come if they had known there was a strike. Men do not wish to undersell their fellows. A man is posted as a picket, to give information of the grievances complained of, and to urge the fresh comers not to defeat the strike that is going on.

"Not only is this justifiable, but it is far better that this should be legal and practised in full publicity than that it should be illegal and done secretly, for, if done secretly, then bad practices are sure to arise. No doubt it is done with a view to coerce the employers, just as the lock-out is with a view to coerce the employed.

"Picketing has other uses and effects. It enables those on strike to know whether the employers are getting men, and what probability there is of the strike being successful, to check any fraudulent claims for strike pay. Besides this, the publicity which the system of picketing gives does, doubtless, exercise a considerable influence upon men's conduct. Those on strike naturally regard any one acting contrary to the general interests of the trade with disfavour, just as an unpatriotic man is condemned by those imbued with a higher sense of national duty. Picketing is justified on these grounds by the workmen, but all physical molestation or intimidation is condemned. The workmen have never urged that such proceedings should not be repressed by penal law." (See *The Labour Law Commission*, by Henry Crompton, adopted and published by the Parliamentary Committee of the Trade Union Congress.)

guilty of a common law offence. The Tailors' officers and committeemen were found guilty merely of organising peaceful picketing, and it became evident that, if the elastic law of conspiracy could thus be brought to bear on Trade Union disputes, practically every incident of strike management might become a crime.[1] Nor did Druitt's case stand alone. Within the memory of the Junta men had been sent to prison for the simple act of striking, or even for a simple agreement to strike.[2] Indeed, merely giving notice of a projected strike, even in the most courteous and peaceful manner, had frequently been held to be an act of intimidation punishable as a crime.[3] In 1851 the posting up of placards announcing a strike was held to be intimidation of the employers.[4] The Government Bill, far from accepting Mr. Frederic Harrison's proposed repeal of all criminal legislation specially applying to workmen, left these judicial decisions untouched, and, by re-enacting them in a codified form, proposed even to make their operation more uniform and effectual.

There was, accordingly, some ground for the assertion of the Trade Unionists that the Government was withdrawing with one hand what it was giving with the other. It seemed of little use to declare the existence of trade societies to be legal if the criminal law was so stretched as to include the ordinary peaceful methods by which these

[1] Baron Bramwell's view of the law excited much animadversion even among lawyers. See Stephen's *History of the Criminal Law*, vol. iii. pp. 221–2. R. *v.* Druitt is reported in 10 Cox, 600.

[2] R. *v.* Hewitt, 5 Cox, 162 (1851). Compare also the observations of Mr. Justice Hannen as to the mere act of striking being in itself sometimes criminal, in Farrer *v.* Close, 4 L. R. Q. B. 612 (1869).

[3] R. *v.* Hewitt, 5 Cox, C. C. 163 (1851).

[4] See Walsby *v.* Anley, 30 L. J. M. C. 121 (1861); Skinner *v.* Kitch, 10 Cox, 493 (1867); O'Neil *v.* Kruger, 4 Best and Smith, 389 (1863); Wood *v.* Bowron, 2 Law Report, Q. B. 21 (1866); R. *v.* Rowlands, 5 Cox, C. C. 493 (1851).

Compare on the whole subject *The Law of Criminal Conspiracies and Agreements*, by R. S. (now Mr. Justice) Wright (London, 1873); Sir William Erle's *Law Relating to Trade Unions* (London, 1873); and Stephen's *History of the Criminal Law*, vol. iii. chap. xxx.

societies attained their ends. Above all, the Trade Unionists angrily resented the idea that any act should be made criminal if done by them, or in furtherance of their Unions, that was not equally a crime if committed by any other person, or in pursuance of the objects of any other kind of association.

A storm of indignation arose in the Trade Union world. The Junta sat in anxious consultation with their legal advisers, who all counselled the utmost resistance to this most dangerous re-enactment of the law. A delegate meeting of the London trades was summoned to protest against the criminal clauses of Mr. Bruce's Bill. But it was necessary to attack the House of Commons from a wider area than the Metropolis. With this view the Junta determined to follow the example set by the Manchester and Birmingham Trades Councils in 1868 and 1869 by calling together a national Trade Union Congress.[1]

[1] Whilst the constant meetings of the Junta, the informal cabinet of the movement, grew out of the great Amalgamated Societies, the Trade Union Congress, or "Parliament of Labour," took its rise in the Trades Councils. We have already described the special Conference held in London in 1864 on the Master and Servant Law, which was convened by the Glasgow Trades Council, and its successor, summoned by the Sheffield Trades Council in 1867 to concert measures of defence against lock-outs. But the credit of initiating the idea of an Annual Conference to deal with all subjects of interest to the Trade Union world belongs to the Manchester and Salford Trades Council, who issued in April, 1868, a circular (fortunately preserved in the *Ironworkers' Journal* for May, 1868, and printed at the end of this volume) convening a Congress to be held in Manchester during Whit-week, 1868. This Congress was attended by thirty-four delegates, who claimed to represent about 118,000 Trade Unionists. The place of meeting of the next Congress was fixed at Birmingham, and the delegates were in due course convened by the Birmingham Trades Council. This second Congress, which met in August, 1869, included forty-eight delegates from forty separate societies, having, it was said, 250,000 members. But although these general congresses were attended by some of the most prominent of the provincial Trade Unionists, they were rather frowned on by the London Junta. The thirty-four delegates at the Manchester Congress included indeed hardly any Metropolitan delegates other than George Potter. Half

The meeting of the Congress was fixed for March, 1871, by which time it was rightly calculated that the obnoxious Bill would be actually under discussion in the House of Commons. The delegates spent most of their time in denouncing the criminal clauses of the Bill, and came very near to opposing the whole measure. But it was ultimately agreed to accept the legalising part of the Bill, whilst using every effort to throw out the Third Section. A deputation was sent to the Home Secretary. Protest after protest was despatched to the legislators, and the Congress adjourned at half-past four each day, in order, as it was expressly declared, that delegates might "devote the evening to waiting upon Members of Parliament." But neither the Government nor the House of Commons was disposed to show any favour to Trade Union action in restraint of that "free competition" and individual bargaining which had so long been the creed of the employers. The utmost concession that could be obtained was that the Bill should be divided into two, so that the law legalising the existence of trade societies might stand by itself, whilst the criminal clauses restraining their action were embodied in a separate "Criminal Law Amendment Bill." This illusory con-

a dozen representatives from London societies went to the Birmingham Congress, including Odger and Mr. George Howell, but when a Parliamentary Committee was appointed Odger refused to serve upon it, regarding it apparently as an unnecessary rival of the Conference of Amalgamated Trades. The next Congress was appointed for London in 1870, but the London leaders took no steps to convene it, until it became necessary, as we have seen, to call up all forces to oppose the projected legislation of 1871. The London Congress of March, 1871, was, in fact, the first in which the real leaders of the movement took part, and the Parliamentary Committee which it appointed, acting at first in conjunction with Applegarth's Conference, naturally took the place of this on its dissolution. The 1872 Congress at Nottingham was attended by seventy-seven delegates, representing 375,000 members. Reports of the earliest four congresses must be sought in the *Beehive* and (as regards those of Manchester, Birmingham, and Nottingham) in the contemporary local newspapers. From 1873 onward the Congress has issued an authorised report of its proceedings.

cession sufficed to detach from the opposition many of those who had at the General Election professed friendship to the Unions. In the main debate Mr. Thomas Hughes and Mr. Mundella stood almost alone in pressing the Trade Unionists' full demands; and though a few other members were inclined to help to some extent, the second reading was agreed to without a division. The other stages were rapidly run through without serious opposition. In the House of Lords the provisions against picketing were made even more stringent, "watching and besetting" by a single individual being made as criminal as "watching and besetting" by a multitude. In this unsatisfactory shape the two Bills passed into law.[1] Trade Societies became, for the first time, legally recognised and fully protected associations; whilst, on the other hand, the legislative prohibition of Trade Union action was expressly reaffirmed, and even increased in stringency.

In the eyes of the Trade Unions this result amounted to a defeat; and the conduct of the Government caused the bitterest resentment.[2] The Secretaries of the Amalgamated Societies, especially Allan and Applegarth, had, indeed, attained the object which they personally had most at heart. The great organisations for mutual succour, which had been built up by their patient sagacity, were now, for the first time, assured of complete legal protection. A number of the larger societies promptly availed themselves of the Trade Union Act, by registering their rules in accordance with its provisions;[3] and in September, 1871, the Conference of Amalgamated Trades "having," as its final minutes declared, "discharged the duties for which it was organised," formally dissolved itself.

[1] 34 and 35 Vic. c. 31 (Trade Union Act), and 34 and 35 Vic. c. 32 (Criminal Law Amendment Act).

[2] See, for instance, the article by Mr. Henry Crompton in the *Beehive*, September 2, 1871.

[3] The Operative Bricklayers' Society (London), of which Coulson was general secretary, stands No. 1 on the Register.

The wider issue which remained to be fought required a more representative organisation. In struggling for legal recognition the Junta had, as we have seen, represented the more enlightened of the Trade Unionists rather than the whole movement. But, by the Criminal Law Amendment Act, the Government had deliberately struck a blow against the methods of all trade societies at all periods. The growing strength of the organisations of the coalminers and cotton-spinners, and the rapid expansion of Trade Unionism which marked this period of commercial prosperity, had for some time been tending towards the development of the informal meetings of the Junta into a more representative executive. The dissolution of the Conference of Amalgamated Trades left the field open; and the leadership of the Trade Union Movement was assumed by the Parliamentary Committee which had been appointed at the Trade Union Congress in the previous March, and which included all the principal leaders of the chief metropolitan and provincial societies of the time.

The agitation which was immediately begun to secure the repeal of the Criminal Law Amendment Act became during the next four years the most significant feature of the Trade Union world. Throughout all the various struggles of these years the Trade Union leaders kept steadily in view the definite aim of getting rid of a law which they regarded, not only as hampering their efforts for better conditions of employment, but also as an indignity and an insult to the hundreds of thousands of intelligent artisans whom they represented. The whole history of this agitation proves how completely the governing classes were out of touch with the recently enfranchised artisans. The legislation of 1871 was regarded by the Government and the House of Commons as the full and final solution of a long-standing problem. "The judges, however, declared," as Mr. Henry Crompton points out, "that the only effect of the legislation of 1871 was to make the trade

object of the strike not illegal. A strike was perfectly legal; but if the means employed were calculated to coerce the employer they were illegal means, and a combination to do a legal act by illegal means was a criminal conspiracy. In other words, a strike was lawful, but anything done in pursuance of a strike was criminal. Thus the judges tore up the remedial statute, and each fresh decision went further and developed new dangers."[1] But Mr. Gladstone's Cabinet steadfastly refused, right down to its fall in 1874, even to consider the possibility of altering the Criminal Law Amendment Act. It was in vain that deputation after deputation pointed out that men were being sent to prison under this law for such acts as peacefully accosting a workman in the street. In 1871 seven women were imprisoned in South Wales merely for saying "Bah" to one blackleg. Innumerable convictions took place for the use of bad language. Almost any action taken by Trade Unionists to induce a man not to accept employment at a struck shop resulted, under the new Act, in imprisonment with hard labour. The intolerable injustice of this state of things was made more glaring by the freedom allowed to the employers to make all possible use of "black-lists" and "character notes," by which obnoxious men were prevented from getting work. No prosecution ever took place for this form of molestation or obstruction. No employer was ever placed in the dock under the law which professedly applied to both parties. In short, boycotting by the employers was freely permitted; boycotting by the men was put down by the police.

The irritation caused by these petty prosecutions was, in December, 1872, deepened into anger by the sentence of twelve months' imprisonment passed upon the London gas-stokers. These men had been found guilty of "conspiracy" to coerce or molest their employers by preparing

[1] *Digest of the Labour Laws*, signed by Messrs. F. Harrison and H. Crompton, and issued by the Trade Union Congress Parliamentary Committees, September, 1875.

for a simultaneous withdrawal of their labour. The vindictive sentence inflicted by Lord Justice Brett was justified by the governing classes on the ground of the danger to the community which a strike of gas-stokers might involve; and the Home Secretary refused to listen to any appeal on behalf of the men.[1] The Trade Union leaders did not fail to perceive that no legal distinction could, under the law as it then stood, be drawn between a gas-stoker and any other workman. If preparing for a strike was punishable, under "the elastic and inexplicable law of conspiracy," by twelve months' imprisonment, it was obvious that the whole fabric of Trade Unionism might be overthrown by any band of employers who chose to put the law in force. The London Trades Council accordingly summoned a delegate meeting "to consider the critical legal position of all trade societies and their officers consequent upon the recent conviction of the London gas-stokers." Representation after representation was made to the Government and to members of Parliament; and the movement for the repeal of the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1871 was widened into a determined attempt to get rid of all penal legislation bearing on trade disputes.[2]

Rarely has a political agitation begun under such apparently unpromising circumstances, and carried so rapidly to a triumphant issue. The Liberal administration of these years, like the majority of both parties in the House of Commons, was entirely dominated by the antagonism felt by the manufacturers to any effective collective bargaining on the part of the men. The representations of the Parliamentary Committee found no sympathy either with Mr. Bruce or with Mr. Lowe who succeeded him as Home Secretary. Mr. Gladstone, as Prime Minister, refused in 1872 to admit that there was any necessity for further legislation, and utterly

[1] They were, however, eventually released after a few months' imprisonment.

[2] See letter to *Beehive*, January 11, 1873.

declined to take the matter up;[1] and during that session the Parliamentary Committee were unable to find any member willing to introduce a Bill for the repeal of the Criminal Law Amendment Act.

The Trade Union leaders, however, did not relax their efforts. Allan, Guile, Odger, and Howell were strongly reinforced by the representatives of the miners, cotton-spinners, and ironworkers. Alexander Macdonald and John Kane, themselves men of remarkable ability, had behind them thousands of sturdy politicians in all the industrial centres. The agitation was fanned by the publication of details of the prosecutions under the new Act. Effective *Tracts for Trade Unionists* were written by Mr. Henry Crompton and Mr. Frederic Harrison. Congresses at Nottingham in 1872, at Leeds in 1873, at Sheffield in 1874 kept up the fire, and passed judgment on those members of Parliament who treated the Parliamentary Committee with contumely. As the time of the General Election drew near, the pressure on the two great political parties was increased. Lists of questions to candidates were prepared embodying the legislative claims of labour; and it was made clear that no candidate would receive Trade Union support unless his answers were satisfactory.

It will be a question for the historian of English politics whether the unexpected rout of the Liberal party at the election of 1874 was not due more to the active hostility of the Trade Unionists than to the sullen abstention of the Nonconformists. The time happened to be a high-water mark of Trade Unionism. In these years of good trade every society had been rapidly increasing its membership. The miners, the agricultural labourers, and the textile operatives in particular had swarmed into organisation in a manner which recalls the rush of 1834. The Trade Union Congress at Sheffield, held just before the General Election of 1874, claimed to represent over 1,100,000 organised workmen, including a quarter of a

[1] Hansard, vol. 212, p. 1132, July 15, 1872.

million of coalminers, as many cotton operatives, and a hundred thousand agricultural labourers. The proceedings of this Congress reveal the feeling of bitter anger which had been created by the obtuseness to the claims of labour of the Liberal leaders of that day. Not content with turning a deaf ear to all the representatives of the workmen, they had, with blundering ignorance, retained as Secretary of the Liberal Association of the City of London the Mr. Sidney Smith who had, since 1851, been the principal officer of the various associations of employers in the engineering and iron trades.[1] As such he had proved himself a bitter and implacable enemy of Trade Unionism. We may imagine what would be the result to-day if either political party were to face a General Election with Mr. Laws, the organiser of the Shipping Federation, as its chief of the staff. And whilst the Liberal party was treating the new electorate with contumely, the Conservative candidates were listening blandly to the workmen's claims, and pledging themselves to repeal the obnoxious law.

Under these circumstances it is not surprising that the old idea of Trade Union abstention from politics gave way to a determined attempt at organised political action. Nor were the Trade Unionists content with merely pressing the organised political parties in the House of Commons. The running of independent Labour candidates against both parties alike was a most significant symptom of the new feeling in Labour politics. The Labour Representation League, composed mainly of prominent Trade Unionists, had for some years been endeavouring to secure the election of working men to the House of Commons; and the independent candidatures of George Odger during 1869 and 1870 had provoked considerable feeling.[2] At a bye-election at Greenwich in 1873, a

[1] This formed the subject of bitter comment in the *Beehive*, January, 1874, just before the General Election.

[2] The following letter, addressed to Odger by John Stuart Mill, will be of interest in connection with the perennial question of the

third candidate was run with working-class support against both the great parties, with the result that Mr. Boord, the Conservative, gained the seat. In what spirit this was regarded by the organised workmen and their trusted advisers may be judged from the following leading article which Professor E. S. Beesly wrote for the *Beehive*, then at the height of its influence: "The result of the Greenwich election is highly satisfactory. . . . The workman has at length come to the conclusion that the difference between Liberal and Tory is pretty much that between upper and nether millstone. The quality of the two is essentially the same. They are sections of the wealth-possessing class, and on all Parliamentary questions affecting the interests of labour they play into one another's hands so systematically and imperturbably that one would suppose they thought workmen never read a newspaper or hear a speech. . . . The last hours of the Session were marked by the failure of two Bills about which workmen cared infinitely more than about all the measures put together for which Mr. Gladstone takes credit since his accession to office—I mean Mr. Harcourt's Conspiracy Bill and Mr. Mundella's Nine Hours Bill. As for Mr.

expediency of "independent" candidatures. It will be found in the *Beehive* for February 13, 1875:—

"Avignon, *February* 19, 1871.

"Dear Mr. Odger,—Although you have not been successful, I congratulate you on the result of the polling in Southwark, as it proves that you have the majority of the Liberal party with you, and that you have called out an increased amount of political feeling in the borough. It is plain that the Whigs intend to monopolise political power as long as they can without coalescing in any degree with the Radicals. The working men are quite right in allowing Tories to get into the House to defeat this exclusive feeling of the Whigs, and may do it without sacrificing any principle. The working men's policy is to insist upon their own representation, and in default of success to permit Tories to be sent into the House until the Whig majority is seriously threatened, when, of course, the Whigs will be happy to compromise, and allow a few working men representatives in the House.

John Stuart Mill."

Mundella's Bill for repealing the Criminal Law Amendment Act, it has never had a chance. For the failure of all these Bills the Ministry must be held responsible. . . .

"This being the case, it is simply silly for Liberal newspapers to mourn over the Greenwich Election as an unfortunate mistake. . . . There was no mistake at all at Greenwich. There was a 'third party' in the field knowing perfectly well what it wanted, and regarding Mr. Boord and Mr. Angerstein with impartial hostility. I trust that such a third party will appear in every large town in England at the next General Election, even though the result should be a Parliament of six hundred and fifty Boords. Everything must have a beginning, and workmen have waited so long for justice that seven years of Tory government will seem a trifling addition to the sum total of their endurance if it is a necessary preliminary to an enforcement of their claims." [1]

The movement for direct electoral action remained without official support from Trade Unions as such until at the 1874 Congress Mr. Broadhurst was able to report that the miners, ironworkers, and some other societies had actually voted money for Parliamentary candidatures. At the General Election which ensued no fewer than thirteen "Labour candidates" went to the poll. In most cases both Liberal and Conservative candidates were run against them, with the result that the Conservatives gained the seats.[2] But at Stafford and Morpeth the official Liberals accepted what they were powerless to prevent; and Messrs. Alexander Macdonald and Thomas Burt, the two

[1] *Beehive*, August 9, 1873; see also that of August 30th.

[2] Halliday, the Secretary of the Amalgamated Association of Miners, offered himself as Labour candidate for Merthyr Tydvil. A fortnight before the polling day he was indicted at Burnley for conspiracy in connection with a local miners' strike, but nevertheless went to the poll, receiving the large total of 4,912 votes. (*Beehive*, January 31, 1874.) Among the other "third candidates" were Messrs. Broadhurst (Wycombe), Howell (Aylesbury), Cremer (Warwick), Lucraft (Finsbury), Potter (Peterborough), Bradlaugh (Northampton), Kane (Middlesborough), Odger (Southwark), Mottershead (Preston), and Walton (Stoke).

leading officials of the National Union of Miners, became the first "Labour members" of the House of Commons.

It is significant of the electioneering attitude of the Conservative leaders that, with the advent of the new Conservative Government, the Trade Unionists appear to have assumed that the Criminal Law Amendment Act would be instantly repealed. Great was the disappointment when it was announced that a Royal Commission was to be appointed to inquire into the operation of the whole of the so-called "Labour Laws." This was regarded as nothing more than a device for shelving the question, and the Trade Union leaders refused either to become members of the Commission or to give evidence before it. It needed the most specific assurances by the Home Secretary that the Government really intended the earliest possible legislation to induce any working man to have anything to do with the Commission. Ultimately Alexander Macdonald, M.P., allowed himself to be persuaded to serve, and Mr. George Shipton, the Secretary of the London Trades Council, gave evidence. The investigation of the Commission was perfunctory, and the report inconclusive. But the Government were too fully alive to the new-found political power of the Unions to attempt to play with the question. At the beginning of 1875 the imprisonment of five cabinetmakers employed at Messrs. Jackson & Graham, a well-known London firm, roused considerable public feeling, and led to many questions in Parliament.[1] In June the Home Secretary, in an appreciative and conciliatory speech, introduced two Bills for altering respectively the civil and criminal law. As amended in Committee by the efforts of Mr. Mundella and others, these measures resulted in Acts which completely satisfied the Trade Union demands. The Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1871 was formally and unconditionally repealed. By the Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act (38 and 39 Vic. c. 86), definite and reason-

[1] See House of Commons Returns, No. 237 of the 2nd, and No. 273 of the 23rd of June, 1875.

able limits were set to the application of the law of conspiracy to trade disputes. The Master and Servant Act of 1867 was replaced by an Employers' and Workmen Act (38 and 39 Vic. c. 90), a change of nomenclature which expressed a fundamental revolution in the law. Henceforth master and servant became, as employer and employee, two equal parties to a civil contract. Imprisonment for breach of engagement was abolished. The legalisation of Trade Unions was completed by the legal recognition of their methods. Peaceful picketing was expressly permitted. The old words "coerce" and "molest," which had, in the hands of prejudiced magistrates, proved such instruments of oppression, were omitted from the new law, and violence and intimidation were dealt with as part of the general criminal code. No act committed by a group of workmen was henceforth punishable unless the same act by an individual was itself a criminal offence. Collective bargaining, in short, with all its necessary accompaniments, was, after fifty years of legislative struggle, finally recognised by the law of the land.[1]

[1] It is not surprising that this sweeping Parliamentary triumph evoked great enthusiasm in the Trade Union ranks. At the Trade Union Congress in October, 1875, such ardent Radicals as Odger, Guile, and George Howell joined in the warmest eulogies of Mr. (now Viscount) Cross, whose sympathetic attitude had surpassed their utmost hopes. "The best friends they had in Parliament," said Mr. Howell, "with one or two exceptions, never declared for the repeal of the Criminal Law Amendment Act. He, with some friends, was under the gallery of the House of Commons when the measure was under discussion, and they could scarcely believe their ears when they heard Mr. Cross declare for the total repeal of the Act." And Odger paid testimony to the "immense singleness of purpose" with which the Home Secretary "had attended to every proposition that had been placed before him," and accorded them "the greatest boon ever given to the sons of toil." An amendment deprecating such "fulsome recognition of the action of the Conservative party" received only four votes (Report of Glasgow Congress, 1875). Some minor amendments of the law relating to the registration and friendly benefits of Trade Unions were embodied in the Trade Union Act Amendment Act of 1876 (39 and 40 Vic. c. 22). See the *Handybook of the Labour Laws*, by Mr. George Howell (London, 1876, 186 pp.).

The paramount importance of the legal and Parliamentary struggle from 1867 to 1875 has compelled us to relegate to the next chapter all mention of striking contemporary events in Trade Union history. The sustained efforts of this decade, too often ignored by a younger generation of Trade Unionists, are even now referred to by the survivors as constituting the finest period of Trade Union activity. For over eight years the Unions had been subjected to the strain of a prolonged and acute crisis, during which their very existence was at stake. Out of this crisis they emerged, as we have seen, triumphantly successful, "liberated," to use Mr. George Howell's words, "from the last vestige of the criminal laws specially appertaining to labour." [1]

This tangible victory was not the only result of the struggle. In order to gain their immediate end the Trade Union leaders had adopted the arguments of their opponents, and had been led to take up a position which, whilst it departed from the Trade Union traditions of the past, proved, in the future, a serious impediment to their further theoretic progress. To understand the intellectual attitude of the Junta and their friends, we must consider in some detail the position which they had to attack. From the very beginning of the century the employers had persistently asserted their right to make any kind of bargain with the individual workman, irrespective of its effect on the Standard of Life. They had, accordingly, adopted the principle, as against both the Trade Unionists and the Factory Act philanthropists, of perfect freedom of contract and complete competition between both workers and employers. In order to secure absolute freedom of competition between individuals it was necessary to penalise any attempt on the part of the workmen to regulate, by combination, the conditions of the bargain. But this involved, in reality, a departure from the principle of legal freedom of contract. One form of contract, that of the collective bargain, was, in effect, made

[1] Speech at Trade Union Congress, Glasgow, October, 1875.

a criminal offence, on the plea that, however beneficial it might seem to the workmen, it cut at the root of national prosperity. It will be obvious that in urging this contention the employers were taking up an inconsistent position. Their pecuniary interest in complete competition outweighed, in fact, their faith in freedom of contract.

Meanwhile the astute workmen who led the movement were gradually concentrating their forces upon the only position from which they could hope to be victorious. They had, it must be remembered, no means of imposing their own view upon the community. Even after 1867 their followers formed but a small minority of the electorate, whilst the whole machinery of politics was in the hands of the middle class. Powerless to coerce or even to intimidate the governing classes, they could win only by persuasion. It was, however, hopeless to dream of converting the middle class to the essential principle of Trade Unionism, the compulsory maintenance of the Standard of Life. In the then state of Political Economy the Trade Unionists saw against them, on this point, the whole mass of educated opinion in the country. John Bright, for instance, did but express the common view of the progressive party of that time when he solemnly assured the working man that "combinations, in the long run, must be as injurious to himself as to the employer against whom he is contending." [1] Lord Shaftesbury, the life-long advocate of factory legislation, was praying that "the working people may be emancipated from the tightest thraldom they have ever yet endured. All the single despots, and all the aristocracies that ever were or ever will be, are as puffs of wind compared with these tornadoes, the Trade Unions." [2] The Sheffield and other

[1] In his letter to a Blackburn millowner, November 3, 1860. *Public Letters of John Bright*, collected and edited by H. J. Leech (London, 1885), p. 80.

[2] Letter to Colonel Maude, quoted by Professor Beesly in his address to the London Trades Council, 1869, reported in *Bricklayers' Circular*, March, 1870.

outrages, the rumours of constant persecution of non-Unionists, the hand-workers' perpetual objection to machinery, the restrictions on piecework and apprenticeship—all these real and fancied crimes had created a mass of prejudice against which it was hopeless for the Trade Unionists to struggle.

The Union leaders, therefore, wisely left this part of their case in the background. They avoided arguing whether Trade Unionism was, in principle, useful or detrimental, right or wrong. They insisted only on the right of every Englishman to bargain for the sale of his labour in the manner he thought most conducive to his own interests. What they demanded was perfect freedom for a workman to substitute collective for individual bargaining, if he imagined such a course to be for his own advantage. Freedom of association in matters of contract became, therefore, their rejoinder to the employers' cry of freedom of competition.

It is clear that the Trade Unionists had the best of the argument. It was manifestly unreasonable for the employers to insist on the principle of non-interference of the State in industry whenever they were pushed by the advocates of factory legislation, and at the same time to clamour for the assistance of the police to put down peaceful and voluntary combinations of their workmen. The capitalists were, in short, committed to the principle of *laisser faire* in every phase of industrial life, from "Free Trade in Corn" to the unlimited use of labour of either sex at any age and under any conditions; and what the workmen demanded was only the application of this principle to the wage contract. "The Trades Union question," writes, in 1869, their chosen representative and most powerful advocate, "is another and the latest example of the truth, that the sphere of legislation is strictly and curiously limited. After legislating about labour for centuries, each change producing its own evils, we have slowly come to see the truth, that we must cease to legislate for it at all. The public mind has been

of late conscious of serious embarrassment, and eagerly expecting some legislative solution, some heaven-born discoverer to arise, with a new Parliamentary nostrum. As usual in such cases, it now turns out that there is no legislative solution at all; and that the true solution requires, as its condition, the removal of the mischievous meddling of the past."[1] This doctrine "that all men may lawfully agree to work or not to work, to employ or not to employ, on any terms that they think fit," forms the whole burden of the speeches and petitions of the Trade Union leaders throughout this controversy. "We do not," say the official representatives of Trade Unionism in their memorial to the Home Secretary in April, 1875, "seek to interfere with the free competition of the individual in the exercise of his craft in his own way; but we reserve to ourselves the right either to work for, or to refuse to work for, an employer according to the circumstances of the case, just as the master has the right to discharge a workman, or workmen; and we deny that the individual right is in any way interfered with when it is done in concert."

The working men had, in fact, picked up the weapon of their opponents and left these without defence. But in so doing the leading Trade Unionists of the time drifted into a position no less inconsistent than that of the employers. When they contended that the Union should be as free to bargain as the individual, they had not the slightest intention of permitting the individual to bargain freely if they could prevent him. Though Allan and Applegarth were able conscientiously to inform the Royal Commission that the members of their societies did not refuse to work with non-society men, they must have been perfectly aware that this convenient fact was only true in those places and at those periods in which society men were not in a sufficiently large majority to do otherwise. The trades to which Mr. Henry Broadhurst and

[1] *Fortnightly Review*, July 1, 1869 "The Trades Union Bill," by Mr. Frederic Harrison.

Mr. George Howell belonged were notorious for the success with which the Unions had maintained their practice of excluding non-society men from their jobs. The coalminers of Northumberland and Durham habitually refused to descend the shaft in company with a non-Unionist.[1]

We shall, hereafter, have occasion to show that this universal aspiration of Trade Unionism—the enforcement of membership—stands, in our opinion, on the same footing as the enforcement of citizenship. But, however this may be, it is evident that the refusal of the Northumberland miners to "ride" with non-society men is, in effect, as coercive on the dissentient minority as the Mines Regulation Act or an Eight Hours Bill. The insistence upon the Englishman's right to freedom of contract was, in fact, in the mouths of staunch Trade Unionists, perilously near cant; and we find Mr. Frederic Harrison himself, when dealing with other legislation, warning them that it would be suicidal for working men to adopt

[1] William Crawford, the trusted leader of the Durham miners, and a steadfast opponent of the Eight Hours Bill, in a well-known letter of later date (of which we possess a copy), emphatically urges the complete ostracism of non-society men. "You should at least be consistent. In numberless cases you refuse to descend and ascend with non-Unionists. The right or wrong of such action I will not now discuss; but what is the actual state of things found in many parts of the county? While you refuse to descend and ascend with these men, you walk to and from the pit, walk in and out bye with them—nay, sometimes work with them. You mingle with them at home over your glass of beer, in your chapels, and side by side you pray with them in your prayer meeting. The time has come when there must be plain speaking on this matter. It is no use playing at shuttlecock in this important portion of our social life. Either mingle with these men in the shaft, as you do in every other place, or let them be ostracised at all times and in every place. Regard them as unfit companions for yourselves and your sons, and unfit husbands for your daughters. Let them be branded, as it were, with the curse of Cain, as unfit to mingle in ordinary, honest, and respectable society. Until you make up your minds to thus completely and absolutely ostracise these goats of mankind, cease to complain as to any results that may arise from their action."

as their own the capitalist cry of "non-interference."[1] The force of this caution must have been evident to the Junta, who had had too much experience of the workings of modern industry not to realise the need for a compulsory maintenance of the Standard of Life. No Trade Unionist can deny that, without some method of enforcing the decision of the majority, effective trade combination is impossible.

It must not be inferred from the above criticism of the theoretic position taken by the men who steered the Trade Union Movement through its great crisis, that they were conscious of their inconsistency with regard to State intervention, or that they deliberately set to work to win their case upon false premises. No one can study the history of their leadership without being impressed by their devotion, sagacity, and high personal worth. We must regard their inconsistency as a striking instance of the danger which besets a party formed without any clear idea of the social state at which it is aiming. In the struggle of these years we watch the English Trade Unionists driven from their Utopian aspirations into an inconsistent opportunism, from which they drifted during the next generation into

[1] See his letter on the Government Annuities Bill, 1864: "Lastly, we are told of Government dictation and interference. I cannot believe men of sense will say this twice seriously. . . . Leave it to the political economists to complain. . . . Let working men remember that whenever a measure in their interest is proposed to Parliament, or suggested in the country—whether it be to limit excessive hours of labour, to protect women and children, to regulate unhealthy labour, to provide them with the means of health, cleanliness, or recreation, to save them from the exactions of unscrupulous employers—it is universally met with opposition from one quarter, that of unrestricted competition; and opposed on one ground, that of absolute freedom of private enterprise. We all know—at least, we all explain—how selfish and shallow this cry is in the mouth of unscrupulous capitalists who resist the Truck System Bill or the Ten Hours Bill. Is it not suicidal in working men to raise a cry which has ever been, and still will be, the great resource of those who strive to set obstacles to their welfare? The next time working men promote a Short Time Bill of any kind they will be told to stick to their principle of non-interference with private capital." (*Beehive*, March 19, 1864.)

the crude "self-help" of an "aristocracy of labour." During the whole of this process there was no moment at which the incompatibility of their Individualist and Collectivist views was perceived. Applegarth and Odger, for instance, saw no inconsistency in becoming leading officials of the "International" on a programme drafted by Karl Marx, and at the same time supporting the current Radical demand for a widespread peasant proprietorship. But it was inevitable that the exclusive insistence upon the Individualist arguments, through which alone the victory of 1875 could be won, should impress the Individualist ideal upon the minds of those who stood round the leaders. Other influences, moreover, promoted the acceptance by the Trade Unionists of the economic shibboleths of the middle class. The failure of the crude experiments of Owen and O'Connor, the striking success of the policy of Free Trade, the growing participation of working men in the Liberal politics of the time, and, above all, the close intimacy which many of them enjoyed with able and fertile thinkers of the middle class, all tended to create a new school of Trade Unionists. In a subsequent chapter we shall describe the results of this intellectual conversion upon the Trade Union Movement. First, however, we must turn to the internal development of these years, which our description of the Parliamentary struggles of 1867–75 has forced us temporarily to ignore.[1]

[1] From 1861 to 1877 the principal working-class organ was the *Beehive*, established by a group of Trade Unionists who formed a company in which over a hundred Unions are said to have taken shares. The editor and virtual proprietor during its whole life appears to have been George Potter, who was assisted by a Consulting Committee, on which appeared, at some time or another, the names of all the leading London Trade Unionists. Potter, as we shall afterwards mention, was a man of equivocal character and conduct, who at no time held any important position in the Trade Union world. But under his nominal editorship the *Beehive* became the best Labour newspaper which has yet appeared. This was due to the persistent support of Messrs. Frederic Harrison, Henry Crompton, E. S. Beesly, Lloyd Jones, and other friends of Trade Unionism who, for fifteen years, contributed innumerable articles, whilst such Trade Union

leaders as Messrs. Applegarth, Howell, and Shipton frequently appeared in its columns. These contributions make it of the greatest possible value to the student of Trade Union history. Unfortunately, the most complete file in any public library—that in the British Museum—begins only in 1869. Mr. John Burns possesses a unique set beginning in 1863, which he has kindly placed at our disposal. In 1877 it was converted into the *Industrial Review*, which came to an end in 1879.

The place of the *Beehive* was, in 1881, to some extent taken by the *Labour Standard*, a penny weekly, established by Mr. George Shipton, the Secretary of the London Trades Council. It ran from May 7, 1881, to April 29, 1882, and contained articles by Mr. Henry Crompton and Professor E. S. Beesly, together with much Trade Union information.

CHAPTER VI.

SECTIONAL DEVELOPMENTS.

[1863–1885.]

FROM 1851 to 1863 all the effective forces in the Trade Union Movement were centred in London. Between 1863 and 1867, as we described in the course of the last chapter, provincial organisations, such as the Glasgow and Sheffield Trades Councils, and provincial leaders such as Alexander Macdonald and John Kane, began to play an important part in the general movement. The dramatic crisis of 1867, and the subsequent political struggle, compelled us to break off our description of the growth of the movement, in order to follow the Parliamentary action of the London leaders. But whilst the Junta and their allies were winning their great victories at Westminster, the centre of gravity of the Trade Union world was being insensibly shifted from London to the industrial districts north of the Humber. This was primarily due to the rapid growth of two great provincial organisations, the federations of Coalminers and Cotton Operatives.

The Miners, now one of the most powerful contingents of the Trade Union forces, were, until 1863, without any effective organisation. The Miners' Association of Great Britain, which, as we have seen, sprang in 1843 into a vigorous existence, collapsed after the disastrous strike of 1844. An energetic attempt made by Martin Jude to re-establish a National Association in 1850,

was unsuccessful. For the next few years "the fragments of union that existed got less by degrees and more minute till, at the close of 1855, it might be said that union among the miners in the whole country had almost died out." [1] The revival which took place between 1858 and 1863 was due, in the main, to the persistent work of the able man who became for fifteen years their trusted leader.

Alexander Macdonald, to whose lifelong devotion the miners owe their present position in the Trade Union world, stands, like William Newton, midway between the

[1] Address of Alexander Macdonald to the Leeds Conference, 1873. Alexander Macdonald, the son of a sailor, who became a miner in Lanarkshire, was born in 1821, and went to work in the pit at the age of eight. Having an ardent desire for education he prepared himself as best he could for Glasgow University, which he entered in 1846, supporting himself from his savings, and from his work as a miner in the summer. Whilst still at the University he became known as a leader of the miners all over Scotland. In 1850 he became a school-teacher, an occupation which he abandoned in 1857 to devote his whole time to agitation on behalf of the miners. On the formation, in 1863, of the National Union of Miners, he was elected president, a position which he retained until his death. Meanwhile he was, by a series of successful commercial speculations, acquiring a modest fortune, which enabled him to devote his whole energies to the promotion of the Parliamentary programme which he had impressed upon the miners. He gave important evidence before the Select Committee of 1865 on the Master and Servant Law. In 1868 he offered himself as a candidate for the Kilmarnock Burghs, but retired to avoid a split. At the General Election of 1874 he was more successful, being returned for Stafford, and thus becoming (with Mr. Burt) the first "Labour Member." He was shortly afterwards appointed a member of the Royal Commission on the Labour Laws, and eventually presented a minority report of his own on the subject. He died in 1881. A history of the coalminers which he projected was apparently never written, and, with the exception of numerous presidential addresses and other speeches, and a pamphlet entitled *Notes and Annotations on the Coal Mines Regulation Act*, 1872 (Glasgow, 1872, 50 pp.), we have found nothing from his pen. A eulogistic notice of his life by Lloyd Jones appeared in the *Newcastle Chronicle*, November 17, 1883, most of which is reprinted in Dr. Baernreither's *English Associations of Working Men*, p. 408.

casual and amateur leaders of the Old Trade Unionism and the paid officials of the new type. Himself originally a miner and the son of a miner, the education and independent means which he had acquired enabled him, from 1857 onwards, to apply himself continuously to the miners' cause. A florid style, and somewhat flashy personality, did him no harm with the rough and uneducated workmen whom he had to marshal. The main source of his effectiveness lay, however, neither in his oratory nor in his powers of organisation, but in his exact appreciation of the particular changes that would remedy the miners' grievances, and in the tactical skill with which he embodied these changes in legislative form. Like his friends, Allan and Applegarth, he relied almost exclusively on Parliamentary agitation as a means for securing his ends. But whilst the Junta were contenting themselves with securing political freedom for Trade Unionists, Macdonald from the first persistently pressed for the legislative regulation of the conditions of labour. And though, like his London allies, he consorted largely with the middle class friends of Trade Unionism, and freely utilised their help in the House of Commons, he proved his superior originality and tenacity of mind by never in the slightest degree abandoning the fundamental principle of Trade Unionism—the compulsory maintenance of the workman's Standard of Life.

"It was in 1856," said Macdonald on a later occasion, "that I crossed the Border first to advocate a better Mines Act, true weighing, the education of the young, the restriction of the age till twelve years, the reduction of the working hours to eight in every twenty-four, the training of managers, the payment of wages weekly in the current coin of the realm, no truck, and many other useful things too numerous to mention here. Shortly after that, bone began to come to bone, and by 1858 we were in full action for better laws." [1] The pit clubs and informal committees that pressed these demands upon the

[1] Address to the Miners' National Conference at Leeds, 1873.

legislature became centres of local organisation, with which Macdonald kept up an incessant correspondence. An arbitrary lock-out of several thousand men by the South Yorkshire coalowners in 1858 welded the miners of that coal-field into a compact district association, and enabled Macdonald, in the same year, to get together a national conference at Ashton-under-Lyne, at which, however, the delegates could claim to represent only four thousand men in union. Not until the end of 1863, indeed, can the Miners' National Union be said to have been effectively established; and the proceedings of the Leeds Conference of that year strike the note of the policy which Macdonald, to the day of his death, never ceased to press upon the miners, and to which the great majority of them have now, after a temporary digression, once more returned.

The Miners' Conference at Leeds was in many respects a notable gathering. Instead of the formless interchange of talk which had marked the previous conference, Macdonald induced the fifty-one delegates who sat from the 9th to the 14th of November, 1863, at the People's Co-operative Hall to organise their meeting on the model of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science, and divide themselves into three sections, on Law, on Grievances, and on Social Organisation, each of which reported to the whole conference.[1] The proceedings of the day were opened with prayer by the "Chaplain to the Conference," the Rev. Joseph Rayner Stephens, celebrated as the advocate of factory legislation

[1] The Conference appointed a sub-committee to compile and publish its proceedings, "a thing," as the preface explains, "altogether unparalleled in the records of labour." And indeed the elaborate volume, regularly published by the eminent firm of Longmans in 1864, entitled *Transactions and Results of the National Association of Coal, Lime, and Ironstone Miners of Great Britain, held at Leeds, November* 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14, 1863, with its 174 pages, its frontispiece representing the pit-brow women, and its motto on the title-page extracted from the writings of Mr. Gladstone, formed a creditable and impressive appeal to the reading public.

and Chartism. In the reports of the sections and the numerous resolutions of the conference we find all the points of Macdonald's programme. The paramount importance of securing the Standard of Life by means of legislative regulation of the conditions of work, is embodied in a lengthy series of proposals which have nearly all since been inserted in the detailed code of mining law. In contradistinction to the view which would make wages depend upon prices, the principle of controlling industry in such a way as to prevent encroachments on the workman's standard maintenance is clearly foreshadowed. "Overtoil," says the report, "produces over-supply; low prices and low wages follow; bad habits and bad health follow, of course; and then diminished production and profits are inevitable. Reduction of toil, and consequent improved bodily health, increases production in the sense of profit; and limits it so as to avoid overstocking; better wages induce better habits, and economy of working follows. . . . The evil of overtoil and over-supply upon wages, and upon the labourer, is therefore a fair subject of complaint; and, we submit, as far as these are human by conventional arrangements, are a fair and proper subject of regulation. Regulations must, of course, be twofold. Part can be legislated for by compulsory laws; but the principle (*sic*) must be the subject of voluntary agreement."[1] The restriction of labour in mines to a maximum of eight hours per day was strongly urged; but at Macdonald's instance it was astutely resolved not to ask for a legal regulation of the hours of adult men, but to confine the Parliamentary proposal to a Bill for boys. And it is interesting to observe already at this time the beginning of the deep cleavage between the miners of Northumberland and Durham and their fellow-workers elsewhere. The close connection between the

[1] *Transactions and Results of the National Association of Coal, Lime, and Ironstone Miners of Great Britain, held at Leeds, November* 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14, 1863, p. 14.

legal regulation of the hours of boys and the fixing of the men's day is brought out by William Crawford, the future leader of the Durham men. The general feeling of the conference was in favour of a drastic legal prohibition of boys being kept in the mine for more than eight hours, but Crawford declared that "an eight hours bill could not be carried out in his district. He wanted the boys to work ten hours a day, and the men six hours."[1] He therefore proposed a legal Ten Hours Day for the boys. The conference, however, declined to depart from the principle of Eight Hours; and the Bill drafted in this sense was eventually adopted without dissent.

Another reform advocated by Macdonald has had far-reaching though unforeseen effect upon the miners' organisation. The arbitrary confiscation of the miners' pay for any tubs or hutches which were declared to be improperly filled, had long been a source of extreme irritation. It had become a regular practice of unscrupulous coalowners to condemn a considerable percentage of the men's hutches, and thus escape payment for part of the coal hewn. The grievance was aggravated by the absolute dependence of the miner, working underground, upon the honesty and accuracy of the agent of the employer on the surface, who recorded the amount of his work. A demand was accordingly made by the men for permission to have their own representative at the pit-bank, who should check the weight to be paid for. During the year 1859 great contests took place in South Yorkshire, in which, after embittered resistance, the employers in several collieries conceded this boon. A determined attempt was then made by the South Yorkshire Miners' Union, aided by Macdonald, to insert a clause in the Mines Regulation Bill, making it compulsory to weigh the coal, and to allow a representative of the men to check the weight. A great Parliamentary

[1] Ibid., p. 17. In Northumberland and Durham the hewers work in two shifts, whilst there is only one shift of boys.

fight took place on the men's amendment, with the result that the Act of 1860 empowered the miners of each pit to appoint a checkweigher, but confined their choice to persons actually in employment at the particular mine.[1] This important victory was long rendered nugatory by the evasions of the coalowners. At Barnsley, for instance, Normansell, appointed checkweigher, was promptly dismissed from employment and refused access to the pit's mouth. When the employer was fined for this breach of the law he appealed to the Queen's Bench; and it cost the Union two years of costly litigation to enforce the reinstatement of the men's agent.[2] The next twenty years are full of attempts by coalowners to avoid compliance with this law. Where the men could not be persuaded or terrified into foregoing their right to appoint a checkweigher, every device was used to hamper his work. Sometimes he was excluded from close access to the weighing-machine. In other pits the weights were fenced up so

[1] Section 29 of Mines Regulation Act of 1860.

[2] Normansell *v.* Platt. John Normansell, the agent of the South Yorkshire Miners' Association, stands second only to Macdonald as a leader of the miners between 1863 and 1875. The son of a banksman, he was born at Torkington, Cheshire, in 1830, and left an orphan at an early age. At seven he entered the pit, and when, at the age of nineteen, he married, he was unable to write his own name. Migrating to South Yorkshire, he became a leader in the agitation to secure a checkweigher, which the local coalowners conceded in 1859. Normansell was elected to the post for his own pit, and rapidly became the leading spirit in the district. After the lock-out of 1864 he was elected secretary to the Union, then counting only two thousand members. Within eight years he had raised its membership to twenty thousand, and built up an elaborate system of friendly benefits. Normansell was the first working man Town Councillor, having been triumphantly elected at Barnsley, his Union subscribing £1,000 to lodge in the bank in his name, in order to enable him to declare himself possessed of the pecuniary qualification at that time required. On his death the amount was voted to his widow. Normansell gave evidence in 1867 before the Select Committee on coalmining, and before that on the Master and Servant Law, in 1868 before the Royal Commission on Trade Unions, and in 1873 before that on the Coal Supply.

that he could not clearly see them. His calculations were hotly disputed, and his interference bitterly resented. The Miners' Unions, however, steadily fought their way to perfect independence for the checkweigher. The Mines Regulation Act of 1872 slightly strengthened his position. Finally the Act of 1887 made clear the right of the men, by a decision of the majority of those employed in any pit, to have, at the expense of the whole pit, a checkweigher with full power to keep an accurate and independent record of each man's work.

It would be interesting to trace to what extent the special characteristics of the miners' organisations are due to the influence of this one legislative reform. Its recognition and promotion of collective action by the men has been a direct incitement to combination. The compulsory levy, upon the whole pit, of the cost of maintaining the agent whom a bare majority could decide to appoint has practically found, for each colliery, a branch secretary free of expense to the Union. But the result upon the character of the officials has been even more important. The checkweigher has to be a man of character insensible to the bullying or blandishments of manager or employers. He must be of strictly regular habits, accurate and business-like in mind, and quick at figures. The ranks of the checkweighers serve thus as an admirable recruiting ground from which a practically inexhaustible supply of efficient Trade Union secretaries or labour representatives can be drawn.

The Leeds Conference of 1863 was the first of a series of yearly or half-yearly gatherings of miners' delegates which did much to consolidate their organisation. The powerful aid brought by Macdonald to the movement for the Master and Servant Act of 1867 has already been described. But between 1864 and 1869 the almost uninterrupted succession of strikes and lock-outs, in one county or another, prevented the National Association from taking a firm hold on the men in the less organised districts. In 1869 a rival federation, called the Amalga-

mated Association of Miners, was formed by the men of some Lancashire pits, to secure more systematic support of local strikes. This split only increased the number of miners in union, which in a few years reached the unprecedented total of two hundred thousand.

It is easy to understand how much this army of miners, marshalled by an expert Parliamentary tactician, added to the political weight of the Trade Union leaders. Though only partially enfranchised, their influence at the General Election of 1868 was marked; and when, in 1871, the Trade Union Congress appointed a Parliamentary Committee, Macdonald became its chairman. Next year he succeeded in getting embodied in the new Mines Regulation Act many of the minor amendments of the law for which he had been pressing; and in 1874 he and his colleague, Mr. Thomas Burt, became, as we have seen, the first working-men members of the House of Commons.

Not less important than the somewhat scattered hosts of the Coalminers was the compact body of the Lancashire Cotton Operatives, who, from 1869 onward, began to be reckoned as an integral part of the Trade Union world. The Lancashire textile workers, who had, in the early part of the century, played such a prominent part in the Trade Union Movement, and whose energetic "Short Time Committees" had, in 1847, obtained the Ten Hours Act, appear to have fallen, during the subsequent years, into a state of disorganisation and disunion. In 1853, it is true, the present Amalgamated Association of Cotton-spinners was established; but this federal Union was weakened, until 1869, by the abstention or lukewarmness of the local organisations of such important districts as Oldham and Bolton. The cotton-weavers were in a somewhat similar condition. The Blackburn Association, established in 1853, was gradually overshadowed by the North-East Lancashire Association, a federation of the local weavers' societies in the smaller towns, established in 1858. This association, growing

out of a secession from the Blackburn organisation, had for its special object the combined support of a skilled calculator of prices, able to defend the operatives' interests in the constant discussions which arose upon the complicated lists of piecework rates which characterise the English cotton industry.[1]

It is difficult to convey to the general reader any adequate idea of the important effect which these elaborate "Lists" have had upon the Trade Union Movement in Lancashire. The universal satisfaction with, and even preference for, the piecework system among the Lancashire cotton operatives is entirely due to the existence of these definitely fixed and published statements. An even more important result has been the creation of a peculiar type of Trade Union official. For although the lists are elaborately worked out in detail—the Bolton Spinning List, for instance, comprising eighty-five pages closely filled with figures[2]—the intricacy of the calculations is such as to be beyond the comprehension not only of the ordinary operative or manufacturer, but even of the investigating mathematician without a very minute knowledge of the technical detail. Yet the week's earnings of every one of the tens of thousands of operatives are computed by an exact and often a separate calculation under these lists. And when an alteration of

[1] The best and indeed the only exact account of these cotton lists is that prepared for the Economic Section of the British Association by a committee consisting of Professor Sidgwick, Professor Foxwell, Mr. A. H. D. Acland, Rev. W. Cunningham, and Professor J. E. C. Munro, the report being drawn up by the latter. (*On the Regulation of Wages by means of Lists in the Cotton Industry*, Manchester, 1887; Heywood; in two parts—Spinning and Weaving.)

The principles upon which the lists are framed are so complicated that we confess, after prolonged study, to be still perplexed on certain points; and though Professor Munro clears up many difficulties, we are disposed to believe that even he, in some particulars, has not in all cases correctly stated the matter.

[2] *Bolton and District Net List of Prices for Spinning Twist, Reeled Yarn or Bastard Twist, and Weft, on Self-actor Mules* (Bolton, 1887, 85 pp.).

the list is in question, the standard wage of a whole district may depend upon the quickness and accuracy with which the operatives' negotiator apprehends the precise effect of each projected change in any of the numerous factors in the calculation. It will be obvious that for work of this nature the successful organiser or "born orator" was frequently quite unfit. There grew up, therefore, both among the weavers and the spinners, a system of selection of new secretaries by competitive examination, which has gradually been perfected as the examiners—that is, the existing officials—have themselves become more skilled. The first secretary to undergo this ordeal was Mr. Thomas Birtwistle,[1] who in 1861 began his thirty years' honourable and successful service of the Lancashire Weavers. Within a few years he was reinforced by other officials selected for the same characteristics. From 1871 onwards the counsels of the Trade Union Movement were strengthened by the introduction of "the cotton men," a body of keen, astute, and alert-minded officials—a combination, in the Trade Union world, of the accountant and the lawyer.

Under such guidance the Lancashire cotton operatives achieved extraordinary success. Their first task was in all districts to obtain and perfect the lists. The rate and method of remuneration being in this way secured, their energy was devoted to improving the other conditions of their labour by means of appropriate legislation. Ever since 1830 the Lancashire operatives, especially the spinners, have strongly supported the legislative regulation of the hours and other conditions of their industry. In 1867 a delegate meeting of the Lancashire textile operatives, under the presidency of the Rev. J. R.

[1] Mr. Birtwistle was, in 1892, at an advanced age, appointed by the Home Secretary an Inspector in the Factory Department, under the "particulars clause" (sec. 24 of the Factory and Workshops Act, 1891), as the only person who could be found competent to understand and interpret the intricacies of the method of remuneration in the weaving trade.

Stephens, had resolved "to agitate for such a measure of legislative restriction as shall secure a uniform Eight Hours Bill in factories, exclusive of meal-times, for adults, females, and young persons, and that such Eight Hours Bill have for its foundation a restriction on the moving power."[1] On the improvement of trade and the revival of Trade Union strength in 1871–2 this policy was again resorted to. The Oldham spinners tried, indeed, in 1871, to secure a "Twelve-o'clock Saturday" by means of a strike. But on the failure of this attempt the delegates of the various local societies, both of spinners and weavers—usually the officials of the trade—met together and established, on the 7th of January, 1872, the Factory Acts Reform Association, for the purpose of obtaining such an amendment of the law as would reduce the hours of labour from sixty to fifty-four per week.

The Parliamentary policy of these shrewd tacticians is only another instance of the practical opportunism of the English Trade Unionist. The cotton officials demurred in 1872 to an overt alliance with the Parliamentary Committee of the Trade Union Congress, just then engaged in its heated agitation for a repeal of the Criminal Law Amendment Act. "Some members of the Short Time Committee," states, without resentment, the Congress report, "thought that even co-operation with the Congress Committee would be disastrous rather than useful, . . . as Lord Shaftesbury and others declared they would not undertake a measure proposed in the interest of the Trades Unions."[2] So far as the public and the House of Commons were concerned, the Bill was accordingly, as we are told, "based upon quite other grounds." Its provisions were ostensibly restricted, like those of the Ten Hours Act, to women and children; and to the support

[1] *Beehive*, February 23, 1867. The circular announcing the resolution is signed by the leading officers of the Cotton-spinners' and Cotton-weavers' Unions of the time.

[2] Report of the Parliamentary Committee to the Trade Union Congress, January, 1873.

of Trade Union champions such as Mr. Thomas Hughes and Mr. Mundella was added that of such philanthropists as Lord Shaftesbury and Mr. Samuel Morley. But it is scarcely necessary to say that it was not entirely, or even exclusively, for the sake of the women and children that the skilled leaders of the Lancashire cotton operatives had diverted their "Short Time Movement" from aggressive strikes to Parliamentary agitation. The private minutes of the Factory Acts Reform Association contain no mention of the woes of the women and the children, but reflect throughout the demand of the adult male spinners for a shorter day. And in the circular "to the factory operatives," calling the original meeting of the association, we find the spinners' secretary combating the fallacy that "any legislative interference with male adult labour is an economic error," and demanding "a legislative enactment largely curtailing the hours of factory labour," in order that his constituents, who were exclusively adult males, might enjoy "the nine hours per day, or fifty-four hours per week, so liberally conceded to other branches of workmen."[1] It was, however, neither necessary nor expedient to take this line in public. The experience of a generation had taught the Lancashire operatives that any effective limitation of the factory day for women and children could not fail to bring with it an equivalent shortening of the hours of the men who worked with them. And in the state of mind, in 1872, of the House of Commons, and even of the workmen in other trades, it would have proved as impossible as it did in 1847 to secure an avowed restriction of the hours of male adults.

The Short Time Bill was therefore so drafted as to apply in express terms only to women and children, whose sufferings under a ten hours day were made much of on the platform and in the press. The battle, in fact,

[1] Circular of December 11, 1871, signed on behalf of the preliminary meeting by Thomas Mawdsley—not to be mistaken for Mr. James Mawdsley, J.P., the present secretary.

was, as one of the leading combatants has declared,[1] "fought from behind the women's petticoats." But it was a part of the irony of the situation that, as Mr. Broadhurst subsequently pointed out,[2] the Bill "encountered great opposition from the female organisations;" and it was, in fact, expressly in the interests of working women that Professor Fawcett, in the session of 1873, moved the rejection of the measure.[3] Even as limited to women and children the proposal encountered a fierce resistance from the factory owners and the capitalists of all industries. The opinion of the House of Commons was averse from any further restriction upon the employers' freedom. The Ministry of the day lent it no assistance. The Bill, introduced in 1872, and again in 1873, made no progress. At length, in 1873, the Government shelved the question by appointing a Royal Commission to inquire into the working of the Factory Acts. But a General Election was now drawing near; and "a Factory Nine Hours Bill for Women and Children" was incorporated in the Parliamentary programme pressed upon candidates by the whole Trade Union world.[4]

We have already pointed out what an attentive ear the Conservative party was at this time giving to the Trade Union demands. It is therefore not surprising that, when Mr. Mundella, in the new Parliament, once

[1] Mr. Thomas Ashton, J.P., then, as now, the secretary of the Oldham Spinners, has often made this statement. On the 26th of May, 1893, the *Cotton Factory Times*, the men's accredited organ, declared, with reference to the Eight Hours Movement, that "now the veil must be lifted, and the agitation carried on under its true colours. Women and children must no longer be made the pretext for securing a reduction of working hours for men."

[2] Speech at Trade Union Congress, Bristol, 1878.

[3] "From what I have heard," writes Professor Beesly in the *Beehive*, May 16, 1874, "I am inclined to think that no single fact had more to do with the defeat of the Liberal party in Lancashire at the last election than Mr. Fawcett's speech on the Nine Hours Bill in the late Parliament."

[4] Report of Trade Union Congress, Sheffield, January, 1874.

more introduced his Bill, the Home Secretary, Mr. (now Viscount) Cross announced that the Government would bring forward a measure of their own. The fact that the Government draft was euphemistically entitled the "Factories (Health of Women, &c.) Bill" did not conciliate the opponents of the shorter factory day which it ensured; but, to the great satisfaction of the spinners, this opposition was unsuccessful; and, if not a nine hours day, at any rate a 56½ hours week became law. This short and successful Parliamentary campaign brought the cotton operatives into closer contact with the London leaders; and from 1875 the Lancashire representatives have exercised an important influence in the Trade Union Congress and its Parliamentary Committee. Henceforth detailed amendments of the Factory Acts, and increased efficiency in their administration, become almost standing items in the official Trade Union programme.

An interesting parallelism might be traced between the cotton operatives on the one hand, and the coalminers on the other. To outward seeming no two occupations could be more unlike. Yet without community of interest, without official intercourse, and without any traceable imitation, the organisations of the two trades show striking resemblances to each other in history, in structural development, and in characteristics of policy, method, and aims. Many of these similarities may arise from the remarkable local aggregation in particular districts, which is common to both industries. From this local aggregation spring, perhaps, the possibilities of a strong federation existing without centralised funds, and of a permanent trade society enduring without friendly benefits. A further similarity may be seen in the creation, in each case, of a special class of Trade Union officials, far more numerous in proportion to membership than is usual in the engineering or building trades. But the most noticeable, and perhaps the most important, of these resemblances is the constancy with which both the miners and the cotton operatives have adhered to the legislative protection of

the Standard of Life as a leading principle of their Trade Unionism.

Whilst these important divisions of the Trade Union army were aiming at legislative protection, victories in another field were bringing whole sections of Trade Unionists to a different conclusion. The successful Nine Hours Movement of 1871–2—the reduction, by collective bargaining, of the hours of labour in the engineering and building trades—rivalled the legislative triumphs of the miners and the cotton operatives.

Since the great strikes in the London building trades in 1859–61, the movement in favour of a reduction of the hours of labour had been dragging on in various parts of the country. The masons, carpenters, and other building operatives had, in many towns, and after more or less conflict, secured what was termed the Nine Hours Day. In 1866 an agitation arose among the engineers of Tyne-side for a similar concession ; but the sudden depression of trade put an end to the project. In 1870, when the subject was discussed at the Newcastle "Central District Committee" of the Amalgamated Engineers, the spirit of caution prevailed, and no action was taken. Suddenly, at the beginning of 1871, the Sunderland men took the matter up, and came out on strike on the 1st of April. After four weeks' struggle, almost before the engineers elsewhere had realised that there was any chance of success, the local employers gave way, and the Nine Hours Day was won.

It was evident that the Sunderland movement was destined to spread to the other engineering centres in the neighbourhood ; and the master engineers of the entire North-Eastern District promptly assembled at Newcastle on April 8th to concert a united resistance to the men's demands. The operatives had first to form their organisation. Though Newcastle has since become one of the best centres of Trade Unionism, the Amalgamated Society of Engineers could, in 1871, count only five or six hundred members in the town ; the Boilermakers,

Steam-Engine Makers, and Ironfounders were also weak, and probably two out of three of the men in the engineering trade belonged to no Union whatsoever. A "Nine Hours League," embracing Unionists and non-Unionists alike, was accordingly formed for the special purpose of the agitation; and this body was fortunate enough to elect as its President, Mr. John Burnett,[1] a leading member of the local branch of the Amalgamated Society, afterwards to become widely known as the General Secretary of that great organisation. The "Nine Hours League" became, in fact though not in name, a temporary Trade Union, its committee conducting all the negotiations on the men's behalf, appealing to the Trade Union world for funds for their support, and managing all the details of the conflict that ensued.[2]

The five months' strike which led up to a signal victory for the men, was, in more than one respect, a notable event in Trade Union annals. The success with which several thousands of unorganised workmen, unprovided with any accumulated funds, were marshalled and disciplined, and

[1] Mr. John Burnett, who was born at Alnwick, Northumberland, in 1842, became, after the Nine Hours Strike, a lecturer for the National Education League, and joined the staff of the *Newcastle Chronicle*. In 1875, on Allan's death, he was elected to the General Secretaryship of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers. In 1886 he was appointed to the newly-created post of Labour Correspondent of the Board of Trade, in which capacity he prepared and issued a series of reports on Trade Unions and Strikes. On the establishment of the Labour Department, in 1893, he became Chief Labour Correspondent under the Commissioner for Labour, and was selected to visit the United States to prepare a report on the effects of Jewish immigration.

[2] A full account of this conflict is given by Mr. John Burnett in his *History of the Engineers' Strike in Newcastle and Gateshead* (Newcastle, 1872, 77 pp.). A description by the Executive of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers is given in their "Abstract Report" up to December 31, 1872. The *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, from April to October, 1871, furnishes a detailed contemporary record. The leading articles and correspondence in the *Times* of September, 1871, are important.

the ability displayed in the whole management of the dispute, made the name of their leader celebrated throughout the world of labour. The tactical skill and literary force with which the men's case was presented, achieved the unprecedented result of securing, for their demands, the support of the *Times*[1] and the *Spectator*. Money was subscribed slowly at first, but, after three months, poured in from all sides. Mr. Joseph Cowen, of the *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, was from the first an ardent supporter of the men, and assisted them in many ways. The employers in all parts of the kingdom took alarm; and a kind of levy of a shilling for each man employed was made upon the engineering firms in aid of the heavy expenses of the Newcastle masters. In spite of the active exertions of the "International," several hundred foreign workmen were imported; but many of these were subsequently induced to desert.[2] Finally the employers conceded the principal of the men's demands; and fifty-four hours became the locally recognised week's time in all the engineering trades.

This widely advertised success, coming at a time of

[1] See the *Times* leader of September 11, 1871. This leader, which pronounced "the conduct of the employers throughout this dispute as imprudent and impolitic," called forth the bewildered remonstrance of Sir William (now Lord) Armstrong, writing on behalf of "the Associated Employers." "We were amazed," writes the great captain of industry, "to see ourselves described in your article as being in a condition of hopeless difficulty; and we really felt that, if the League themselves had possessed the power of inspiring that article, they could scarcely have used words more calculated to serve their purposes than those in which it is expressed. The concurrent appearance in the *Spectator* of an article exhibiting the same bias adds to our surprise. We had imagined that a determined effort to wrest concessions from employers by sheer force of combination was not a thing which found favour with the more educated and intelligent classes, whose opinions generally find expression in the columns of the *Times*." (*Times*, September 14, 1871.)

[2] Here the "International" was of use. At Mr. Burnett's instigation, Mr. Cohn, the Danish secretary in London, proceeded to the Continent to check this immigration, his expenses being paid by the Amalgamated Society of Engineers.

expanding trade, greatly promoted the movement for the Nine Hours Day. From one end of the kingdom to the other, every little Trade Union branch discussed the expediency of sending in notices to the employers. The engineering trades in London, Manchester, and other great centres induced their employers to grant their demands without a strike. The great army of workmen engaged in the shipbuilding yards on the Clyde even bettered this example, securing a fifty-one hours week. The building operatives quickly followed suit. Demands for a diminution of the working day, with an increased rate of pay per hour, were handed in by local officials of the Carpenters, Masons, Bricklayers, Plumbers, and other organisations. In many cases non-society men took the lead in the movement; but it was soon found that the immediate success of the applications depended on the estimate formed by the employers of the men's financial resources, and their capacity to withhold their labour for a time sufficient to cause embarrassment to business. Wherever the employers were assured of this fact, they usually gave way without a conflict. The successes accordingly did much to create, in the industries in question, a preference for combination and collective bargaining as a means of improving the conditions of labour. The prevalence of systematic overtime, which has since proved so formidable a deduction from the advantages gained by the Nine Hours Movement, was either overlooked by sanguine officials, or covertly welcomed by individual workmen as affording opportunities for working at a higher rate of remuneration.[1] On the other hand, it was a patent fact that the mechanic employed in attending to the machinery of a textile mill was the only member of his trade who was excluded from participation in the

[1] With regard to overtime, Mr. Burnett informs us that "it was found impossible to carry a Nine Hours Day pure and simple at the time of the strike of 1871, and that overtime should still be worked as required was insisted upon as a first condition of settlement by the employers."

shortening of hours enjoyed by his fellow-tradesmen; and that his failure to secure a shorter day was an incidental consequence of the existence of legislative restrictions. Thus, at the very time that the textile operatives and coalminers were, as we have seen, exhibiting a marked tendency to look more and more to Parliamentary action for the protection of the Standard of Life, the facts, as they presented themselves to the Amalgamated Engineer or Carpenter, were leading the members of these trades to a diametrically opposite conclusion.

But though faith in trade combinations and collective bargaining was strengthened by the success of the Nine Hours Movement, the victories of the men did not increase the prestige of the two great Amalgamated Societies. The growing adhesion of the Junta to the economic views of their middle class friends was marked by the silent abandonment by Allan, Applegarth, and Guile of all leadership in trade matters. Already in 1865 we find the Executive Council of the Amalgamated Engineers explaining that, although they sympathised with advance movements, they felt unable to either support them by grants or to advise their members to vote a special levy.[1] The "backwardness of the Council of the Engineers" constantly provoked angry criticism. The chief obstacles to advancement were declared to be Danter, the President of the Council, and the General Secretary, whose minds had been narrowed "by the routine of years of service within certain limits. . . . Never, since it effected amalgamation, has the Society solved one social problem; nor has it now an idea of future progress. Its money is unprofitably and injudiciously invested—even with a miser's care—while its councils are marked with all the chilly apathy of a worn-out mission."[2] What proved to be the greatest trade movement since 1852 was undertaken in spite of the

[1] Meeting of London pattern-makers to seek advance of wages, *Beehive*, October 21, 1865.

[2] Letter from "Amalgamator," *Beehive*, January 19, 1867.

official disapproval of the governing body, and was carried to a successful issue without the provision from headquarters of any leadership or control. Though the Nine Hours Strike actually began in Sunderland on April 1, 1871, the London Executive remained until July silent on the subject. Towards the end of that month, when the Newcastle men had been out for seven weeks, a circular was issued inviting the branches to collect voluntary subscriptions for their struggling brethren. Ultimately, in September, the "Contingent Fund," out of which strike pay is given, was re-established by vote of the branches; and the strike allowance of 5s. per week, over and above the ordinary out-of-work pay, was issued, after fourteen weeks' struggle, to the small minority of the men on strike who were members of the Society. An emissary was sent to the Continent, at the Society's expense, to defeat the employers' attempt to bring over foreign engineers; but with this exception all the expenses of the struggle were defrayed from the subscriptions collected by the Nine Hours League.[1] And if we turn for a moment from the Amalgamated Society of Engineers to the other great trade and friendly societies of the time, it is easy, in the minutes of their Executive Councils and the proceedings of their branches, to watch the same tendency at work. Whether it is the Masons or the Tailors, the Ironfounders or the Carpenters, we see the same abandonment by the Central Executive of any dominant principle of trade policy, the same absence of initiative in trade movements, and the same more or less persistent struggle to check the trade activity of the branches. In the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters, for example, we find, during these years, no attempt by headquarters to "level up" the wages of low paid districts, or to grapple with the problems of overtime or piecework. We watch, on

[1] The rank and file were more sympathetic than the Executive. The machinery for making the collections was mostly furnished by the branches and committees of the Society.

the contrary, the branches defending themselves before the Executive for their little spurts of local activity, and pleading, in order to wring from a reluctant treasury the concession of strike pay, that they have been dragged into the "Advance Movement" by the more aggressive policy of the "General Union" (the rival trade society of the old type), or by irresponsible "strike-committees" of non-society men.

Time and growth were, in fact, revealing the drawbacks of the constitution with which Newton and Allan had endowed their cherished amalgamation, and which had been so extensively copied by other trades. The difficulties arising from the attempt to unite, in one organisation, men working in the numerous district branches of the engineering trade, demanded constant thought and attention. The rapid changes in the industry, especially in connection with the growing use of new machinery, needed to be met by a well-considered flexibility, dictated by full knowledge of the facts, and some largeness of view. To maintain a harmonious yet progressive trade policy in all the hundreds of branches would, of itself, have taxed the skill of a body of experts free from other preoccupations. All these duties were, however, cast upon a single salaried officer,[1] working under a committee of artisans, who met in the evening after an exhausting day of physical toil.

The result might have been foreseen. The rapid growth of the society brought with it a huge volume of detailed business. Every grant of accident benefit or superannuation allowance was made by the Executive Council. Every week this body had to decide on scores of separate applications for gifts from the Benevo-

[1] An "Assistant Secretary" was subsequently added, and eventually another. But these assistants were, like the General Secretary himself, recruited from the ranks of the workmen, and however experienced they may have been in trade matters, were necessarily less adapted to the clerical labour demanded of them. The great Trade Friendly Societies of the Masons and Ironfounders have, to this day, only one assistant secretary, and no clerical staff whatever.

lent Fund. Every time any of the tens of thousands of members failed to get what he wanted from his branch, he appealed to the Executive Council. Every month an extensive trade report had to be issued. Every quarter the branch accounts had to be examined, dissected, and embodied in an elaborate summary, itself absorbing no small amount of labour and thought. The hundreds of branch secretaries and treasurers had to be constantly supervised, checked by special audits, and perpetually admonished for negligent or accidental breaches of the complicated code by which the Society was governed. The Executive Council became, in fact, absorbed in purely "Treasury" work, and spent a large part of its time in protecting the funds of the Society from extravagance, laxity of administration or misappropriation. The quantity of routine soon became enormous; and the whole attention of the General Secretary was given to coping with the mass of details which poured in upon him by every post.

This huge friendly society business brought with it, too, its special bias. Allan grew more and more devoted to the accumulating fund, which was alike the guarantee and the symbol of the success of his organisation. Nothing was important enough to warrant any inroad on this sacred balance. The Engineers' Central Executive, indeed, practically laid aside the weapon of the strike. "We believe," said Allan before the Royal Commission in 1867, "that all strikes are a complete waste of money, not only in relation to the workmen, but also to the employers."[1] The "Contingent Fund," out of which alone strike pay could be given, was between 1860 and 1872 repeatedly abolished by vote of the members, re-established for a short time, and again abolished. Trade Unionists who remembered the old conflicts, viewed with surprise and alarm the spirit which had come over the once active organisation. Even the experienced Dunning, whose

[1] Question 827 in Report of Trade Union Commission (March 26, 1867).

moderation had, as we have suggested, dictated the first manifesto in which the new spirit can be traced, was moved to denunciation of Allan's apathy. "As a Trades Union," he writes in 1866, "the once powerful Amalgamated Society of Engineers is now as incapable to engage in a strike as the Hearts of Oak, the Foresters, or any other extensive benefit society. . . . It formerly combined both functions, but now it possesses only one, that of a benefit society, with relief for members when out of work or travelling for employment superadded. . . . The Amalgamated Engineers, as a trade society, has ceased to exist." [1]

It would be a mistake to assume that the inertia and supineness of the "Amalgamated" Societies was a necessary result of their accumulated funds or their friendly benefits. The remarkable energy and success of the United Society of Boilermakers and Iron-shipbuilders, established in 1832, and between 1865 and 1875 rapidly increasing in membership and funds, shows that elaborate friendly benefits are not inconsistent with a strong and consistent trade policy. This quite exceptional success is, we believe, due to the fact that the Boilermakers provided an adequate salaried staff to attend to their trade affairs. The "district delegates" who were, between 1873 and 1889, appointed for every important district, are absolutely unconcerned with the administration of friendly benefits, and devote themselves exclusively to the work of Collective Bargaining. Unlike the General Secretaries of the Engineers, Carpenters, Masons, or Ironfounders, who have had but one salaried assistant, Mr. Robert Knight, the able secretary of the Boilermakers, has had under his orders an expert professional staff, and has accordingly been able, not only to keep both employers and unruly members in check, but also successfully to adapt the Union policy to the changing conditions of the industry. In short, it was not the presence of friendly benefits, but the absence of any such class of professional organisers as exists in

[1] *Bookbinders' Trade Circular*, January, 1866.

the organisations of the Coalminers, Cotton Operatives, and Boilermakers, that created the deadlock in the administration of the great trade friendly societies.[1]

The direct result of this abnegation of trade leadership was a complete arrest of the tendency to amalgamation, and, in some cases, even a breaking away of sections already within the organisation. The various independent societies, such as the Boilermakers, Steam-Engine Makers, and the Co-operative Smiths, gave up all idea of joining their larger rival. In 1872 the Patternmakers, who had long been discontented at the neglect of their special trade interests, formed an organisation of their own, which has since competed with the Amalgamated for the allegiance of this exceptionally skilled class of engineers. Nor was Allan at all eager to make his organisation coextensive with the whole engineering industry. The dominant idea of the early years of the amalgamation—the protection of those who had, by regular apprenticeship, acquired "a right to the trade"—excluded many men actually working at one branch or another, whilst the friendly society bias against unprofitable recruits co-operated to restrict the membership to such sections of the engineering industry, and such members of each section, as could earn a minimum time wage fixed for each locality by the District Committee.

This exclusiveness necessarily led to the development of other societies, which accepted those workmen who were not eligible for the larger organisation. The little local clubs of Manchester Machine-workers and Metal-planers had accordingly expanded between 1867 and 1872 into national organisations, and began to claim consideration at the hands of the better paid engineers, on whose heels they were treading. New societies, such as those of the Seagoing Engineers, the National Society of Amalga-

[1] In 1892 the Amalgamated Engineers provided themselves, not only with district delegates, like those of the Boilermakers, but also with a salaried Executive Council. The Amalgamated Society of Carpenters has since started district delegates, and the other national societies are now gradually following suit.

mated Brassworkers, the Independent Order or Engineers and Machinists, and the Amalgamated Society of Kitchen Range, Stove Grate, Gas Stoves, Hot Water, Art Metal, and other Smiths and Fitters, sprang into existence during 1872, in avowed protest against the "aristocratic" rule of excluding all workmen who were not receiving a high standard rate. The Associated Blacksmiths of Scotland, which had been formed in 1857 out of a class of smiths which was, at the time, unrecognised in the rules of the Amalgamated, now began steadily to increase in membership. Finally, during the decade various local societies were refused the privilege of amalgamation on the ground that either they included sections of the trade not recognised by the rules, or that the average age of their constituents was such as to make them unprofitable members of a society giving heavy superannuation benefit. To the tendency to create an "aristocracy of labour" was added, therefore, the fastidiousness of an insurance company.

Many causes were thus co-operating to shift the centre of Trade Union influence from London to the provinces. The great trade friendly societies of Engineers, Carpenters, and Ironfounders were losing that lead in Trade Union matters which the political activity of the Junta had acquired for them. The Junta itself was breaking up. Applegarth, in many respects the leader of the group, resigned his secretaryship in 1871, and left the Trade Union Movement. Odger, from 1870 onwards, was devoting himself more and more to general politics. Allan, long suffering from an incurable disease, died in 1874. Meanwhile provincial Trade Unionism was growing apace. The Amalgamated Society of Engineers, so long preeminent in numbers, began to be overshadowed by the federations of Coalminers and Cotton Operatives. Even in the iron trades it found rivals in the rapidly growing organisations of Boilermakers (Iron-shipbuilders), whose headquarters were at Newcastle, and the Ironworkers centred at Darlington, whilst minor engineering societies were cropping up in all directions in the northern counties.

The tendency to abandon London was further shown by the decision of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters in 1871 to remove their head office to Manchester, a change which had the incidental effect of depriving the London leaders of the counsels of Applegarth's successor, Mr. J. D. Prior, one of the ablest disciples of the Junta.

But although London was losing its hold on the Trade Union Movement, no other town inherited the leadership. Manchester, it is true, attracted to itself the headquarters of many national societies, and contained in these years perhaps the strongest group of Trade Union officials.[1] But there was no such concentration of all the effective forces as had formerly resulted in the Junta. Though Manchester might have furnished the nucleus of a Trade Union Cabinet, Alexander Macdonald was to be found either in Glasgow or London, Mr. Robert Knight at Liverpool and afterwards in Newcastle, John Kane at Darlington, the miners' agents all over the country, whilst Mr. Henry Broadhurst (who in 1875 succeeded Mr. George Howell as the Secretary of the Parliamentary Committee), Mr. John Burnett, the General Secretary of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, and Mr. George Shipton, the Secretary of the London Trades Council, naturally remained in the Metropolis. The result of the shifting from London was, accordingly, not the establishment elsewhere of any new executive centre of the Trade Union Movement, but the rise of a sectional spirit, the promotion of sectional interests, and the elaboration of sectional policies on the part of the different trades.

[1] Mention should here be made of the Manchester and District Association of Trade Union Officials, an organisation which grew out of a joint committee formed to assist the South Wales miners in their strike of 1875. The frequent meetings, half-serious, half social, of this grandly named association, known to the initiated as "the Peculiar People," served for many years as opportunities for important consultations on Trade Union policy between the leaders of the numerous societies having offices in Manchester. The society still continues, and both the writers of this work have the honour of being among its Vice-Presidents.

We have attempted in some detail to describe the internal growth of the Trade Union Movement between 1867 and 1875, in order to enable the reader to understand the disheartening collapse which ensued in 1878–9, and the subsequent splitting up of the Trade Union world into the hostile camps once more designated the Old Unionists and the New. But all the unsatisfactory features of 1871–5 were, during these years, submerged by a wave of extraordinary commercial prosperity and Trade Union expansion. The series of Parliamentary successes of 1871–5 produced, as we have seen, a feeling of triumphant elation among the Trade Union leaders. To the little knot of working men who had conducted the struggle for emancipation and recognition, the progress of these years seemed almost beyond belief. In 1867 the officials of the Unions were regarded as pothouse agitators, "unscrupulous men, leading a half idle life, fattening on the contributions of their dupes," and maintaining, by violence and murder, a system of terrorism, which was destructive, not only of the industry of the nation, but also of the prosperity and independence of character of the unfortunate working men who were their victims. The Unionist workman, tramping with his card in search of employment, was regarded by the constable and the magistrate as something between a criminal vagrant and a revolutionist. In 1875 the officials of the great societies found themselves elected to the local School Boards, and even to the House of Commons, pressed by the Government to accept seats on Royal Commissions, and respectfully listened to in the lobby. And these political results were but the signs of an extraordinary expansion of the Trade Union Movement itself. "The year just closed," says the report of the Parliamentary Committee in January, 1874, "has been unparalleled for the rapid growth and development of Trade Unionism. In almost every trade this appears to have been the same; but it is especially remarkable in those branches of industry which have hitherto been but badly organised." Exact numerical

details cannot now be ascertained; but the Trade Union Congress of 1872 claimed to represent only 375,000 organised workmen, whilst that of 1874 included delegates from nearly three times as many societies, representing a nominal total of 1,191,922 members.[1] It is probable that between 1871 and 1875 the number of Trade Unionists was more than doubled.

We see this progress reflected in the minds of the employers. At the end of 1873 we find the newly established National Federation of Associated Employers of Labour declaring that "the voluntary and intermittent efforts of individual employers," or even employers' associations confined to a single trade or locality, are helpless against "the extraordinary development—far-reaching, but openly-avowed designs—and elaborate organisation of the Trades Unions." "Few are aware," continues this manifesto, "of the extent, compactness of organisation, large resources, and great influence of the Trades Unions. . . . They have the control of enormous funds, which they expend freely in furtherance of their objects; and the proportion of their earnings which the operatives devote to the service of their leaders is startling. . . . They have a well-paid and ample staff of leaders, most of them experienced in the conduct of strikes, many of them skilful as organisers, all forming a class apart, a profession, with interests distinct from, though not necessarily antagonistic to, those of the workpeople they lead, but from their very *raison d'être* hostile to those of the employers and the rest of the community. . . . They have, through their command of money, the imposing aspect of their organisation, and partly, also, from the mistaken humanitarian aspirations of a certain number of literary men of good standing, a large army of literary talent which is *prompt* in their service on all occasions of controversy. They have their own press as a field for these exertions.

[1] Report of the Trade Union Congress, Sheffield, 1874. A table printed in the Appendix to the present volume gives such comparative statistics of Trade Union membership as we have been able to compile

Their writers have free access to some of the leading London journals. They organise frequent public meetings, at which paid speakers inoculate the working classes with their ideas, and urge them to dictate terms to candidates for Parliament. Thus they exercise a pressure upon members of Parliament, and those aspirant to that honour, out of all proportion to their real power, and beyond belief except to those who have had the opportunity of witnessing its effects. They have a standing Parliamentary Committee, and a programme; and active members of Parliament are energetic in their service. They have the attentive ear of the Ministry of the day; and their communications are received with instant and respectful attention. They have a large representation of their own body in London whenever Parliament is likely to be engaged in the discussion of the proposals they have caused to be brought before it. Thus, untrammelled by pecuniary considerations, and specially set apart for this peculiar work, without other clashing occupations, they resemble the staff of a well-organised, well-provisioned army, for which everything that foresight and preoccupation in a given purpose could provide, is at command."[1] It is not surprising that the Parliamentary Committee of the Trade Union Congress, composed, as it was, of the "staff of leaders" referred to, should have had this involuntary tribute to their efficiency reprinted and widely circulated among their constituents.

[1] "Statement as to Formation and Objects" of the National Federation of Associated Employers of Labour, December 11, 1873, reprinted by the Parliamentary Committee of the Trade Union Congress. This Federation comprised in its ranks a large proportion of the great "captains of industry" of the time, including such shipbuilders as Laird and Harland and Wolff; such textile manufacturers as Crossley, Brinton, Marshall, Titus Salt, Akroyd, and Brocklehurst; such engineers as Mawdsley, Son and Field, Combe, Barbour and Combe, and Beyer and Peacock; such ironmasters as David Dale and John Menelaus; such builders as Trollope of London, and Neill of Manchester, and such representatives of the great industrial peers as Sir James Ramsden, who spoke for the Duke of Devonshire, and Mr. Fisher Smith, the agent of the Earl of Dudley.

The student will form a more qualified estimate of the position in 1873–5 than either the elated Trade Unionists or the alarmed employers. In the first place, great as was the numerical expansion of these years, the reader of the preceding chapters will know that it was not without parallel. The outburst of Trade Unionism between 1830 and 1834 was, so far as we can estimate, even greater than that between 1871 and 1875, whilst it was far more rapid in its development. There have been, in fact, three high-water marks in the Trade Union history of our country, 1833–4, 1873–4, and 1889–90. In the absence of complete and trustworthy statistics it is difficult to say at which of these dates the sweeping in of members was greatest. The wave of 1889–90 has, in 1894, not yet spent its force; and we are therefore unable to estimate its import for the movement. But it is easy to discern that the expansion of 1873–4 was marked by features which were both like and unlike those of its predecessor.

Like the outburst of 1833–4, the marked extension of Trade Unionism in 1872 reached even the agricultural labourers. For nearly forty years since the transportation of the Dorchester Labourers good times and bad had passed over their heads without resulting in any combined effort to improve their condition. On February 7, 1872, however, the labourers of certain parishes of Warwickshire met at Wellesbourne to discuss their grievances. At a second meeting, a week later, Mr. Joseph Arch, a labourer of Barford, made a speech which bore fruit. On the 11th of March two hundred men resolved to strike for higher wages. Unlike most strikes this one attracted from the first the favourable notice of the press.[1] Publicity brought immediate funds and

[1] The immediate publicity given to the agitation was due, in the first place, to the sympathy of Mr. J. E. Matthew Vincent, the editor of the *Leamington Chronicle*, and secondly, to the instinct of the *Daily News*, which promptly sent Mr. Archibald Forbes, its war correspondent, to Warwickshire, and "boomed" the movement in a series of special articles. A contemporary account of the previous career of Joseph Arch is given by the Rev. F. S. Attenborough in his *Life of*

sympathisers. On the 29th of March the inaugural meeting of the Warwickshire Agricultural Labourers' Union was held at Leamington, under the presidency of the Hon. Auberon Herbert, M.P., a donation of one hundred pounds being handed in by a rich friend. Through the eloquence, the revivalist fervour, and the untiring energy of Mr. Joseph Arch, the movement spread like wildfire among the rural labourers of the central and eastern counties. The mania for combination which came over the country population during the next few months recalls, indeed, the mushroom growth of the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union of forty years before. Within two months delegates from twenty-six counties met to transform the local society into a National Agricultural Labourers' Union, which, by the end of the year, boasted of a membership of nearly a hundred thousand.[1]

The organised Trade Unions rallied promptly to the support of the labourers, and contributed largely to their funds. The farmers met the men's demand by a widespread lock-out of Unionist labourers, which called forth the support of Trades Councils and individual societies all over the country.[2] Mr. George Howell, then Secretary

Joseph Arch (Leamington, 1872, 37 pp.). See also *The Revolt of the Field*, by A. W. Clayden (London, 1874, 234 pp.); and *Zür Geschichte der Englischen Arbeiterbewegung im Jahre*, 1872, by Dr. Friedrich Kleinwächter (Jena, 1875, 104 pp.).

[1] Other Labourers' Unions sprang up which refused to be absorbed in the National; and the London Trades Council summoned a conference in March, 1873, to promote unity of action. Considerable jealousy was shown of any centralising policy, and eventually a Federal Union of Agricultural and General Labourers was formed by half a dozen of the smaller societies, with an aggregate membership of 50,000.

[2] The Birmingham Trades Council, for instance, issued the following poster:—

"Great Lock-out of Agricultural Labourers!"

"An Appeal. Is the Labourer worthy of his Hire?

"This question is to all lovers of freedom and peaceful progress, and it is left for them to say whether that spark of life and hope which has been kindled in the breasts of our toiling brothers in the

of the Parliamentary Committee, Mr. George Shipton, the Secretary of the newly revived London Trades

agricultural districts shall be extinguished by the pressure of the present lock-out. The answer is No! and the echo resounds from ten thousand lips. But let us be practical; a little help is of more value than much sympathy; we must not stand to pity, but strive to send relief. The cause of the agricultural labourer is our own; the interests of labour in all its forms are very closely bound together, and the simple question for each one is, How much can I help, and how soon can I do it? If we stay thinking too long, action may come too late; these men, our brethren, now deeply in adversity, may have fallen victims when our active efforts might have saved them. The strain upon the funds of their Union must be considerable with such a number thrown into unwilling idleness, and that for simply asking that their wages, in these times of dear food, might be increased from 13s. to 14s. per week. Money is no doubt wanted, and it is by that alone the victory can be won. Let us therefore hope that Birmingham will once again come to the rescue, determined to assist these men to a successful resistance of the oppression that is attempted in this lock-out.

"The great high priest and deliverer of this people now seeks our aid. We must not let him appeal to us in vain, his efforts have been too noble in the past, the cause for which he pleads is too full of righteousness, and the issues too great to be passed by in heedless silence. Let us all to work at once. We can all give a little, and each one may encourage his neighbour to follow his example. The conflict may be a severe one. It is for freedom and liberty to unite as we have done. We have reaped some of the advantages of our Unions; we must assist them to establish theirs, and not allow the ray of hope that now shines across the path of our patient but determined fellow-toilers to be darkened by the blind folly of their employers, who, being in a measure slaves to the powers above them, would, if they could, even at their own loss, consign all below them to perpetual bondage. This must not be. We must not allow these men to be robbed of their right to unite, or their future may be less hopeful than their past. Let some one in every manufactory and workshop collect from those disposed to give, and so help to furnish the means to assist these men to withstand the powers brought against them, showing to their would-be oppressors that we have almost learned the need and duty of standing side by side until all our righteous efforts shall be crowned by victory.

"All members of the Birmingham Trades Council are authorised to collect and receive contributions to the fund, and will be pleased to receive assistance from others.

"By order of the Birmingham Trades Council,
"W. Gilliver, Secretary."

Council, and many other leaders, gave up their nights and days to perfecting the labourers' organisations. The skilled trades, indeed, furnished many of the officials of the new Unions. Mr. Joseph Arch found for his head-quarters an able general secretary in Henry Taylor, a carpenter, whilst the Kentish labourers enjoyed the services of a compositor. This help, together with the funds and countenance of influential philanthropists, made the outburst less transient than that of 1833–4. In many villages the mere formation of a branch led to an instantaneous rise of wages. But, as in 1833–4, the audacity of the field labourer in imitating the combinations of the town artisan, provoked an almost indescribable bitterness of feeling on the part of the squirearchy and their connections. The farmers, wherever they dared, ruthlessly "victimised" any man who joined the Union. It is needless to say that they received the cordial support of the rural magistracy. In aid of a lock-out near Chipping Norton, two justices, who happened both to be clergymen, sent sixteen labourers' wives, some with infants at the breast, to prison with hard labour, for "intimidating" certain non-Union men. An attempt to punish the leaders of a meeting at Farringdon, on the ground of "obstruction of the highway," was only defeated by bringing down an eminent Queen's Counsel from London to overawe the local bench. Innumerable acts of petty tyranny and oppression proved how far the landed interest had lagged behind the capitalist employers in the matter of Freedom of Combination. Nor was the Established Church more sympathetic. At the great meeting held at Exeter Hall on behalf of the labourers, when the chair was taken by Mr. Samuel Morley, M.P., the only ecclesiastic who appeared on the platform was Archbishop (afterwards Cardinal) Manning. In fact the spirit in which the rural clergy viewed this social upheaval is not unfairly typified by the public utterance of a learned bishop. On September 2, 1872, Dr. Ellicott, the Bishop of Gloucester, speaking at a meeting of the Gloucester Agricultural

Society, significantly suggested the village horsepond as a fit destination for the "agitators," or delegates sent by the Union to open new branches. And the farmers, the squires, and the Church were supported by the army. When the labourers in August, 1872, struck for an increase of wages, the officers, in Oxfordshire and Berkshire, placed the soldiers at the disposal of the farmers for the purpose of getting in the harvest and so defeating the Union.

This insurrection of the village and the autocratic spirit which it roused in the owners of land and tithe, had, we believe, a far-reaching political effect. With its results upon the agitation for Church disestablishment and the growing Radicalism of the counties we are not concerned. We trace, however, from these months, the appearance in the Trade Union programme of the proposals relating to Land Law Reform and the Summary Jurisdiction of the Magistrates, which seem, at first sight, unconnected with the grievances of the town artisan. But though the agricultural labourer had his effect upon the Trade Union Movement, Trade Unionism was not, at this time, able to do much for him. Funds and personal help were freely placed at his service by his brother Unionists. The minute books and balance sheets of the great Unions and the Trades Councils show how warm and generous was the response made to his appeal by the engineers, carpenters, miners, and other trades. The London Trades Council successfully exerted itself to stop the lending of troops to the farmers, and procured a fresh regulation explicitly prohibiting for the future such assistance "in cases where strikes or disputes between farmers and their labourers exist."[1] The public disapproval of the sentence in the Chipping Norton case was used by the Trade Union leaders as a powerful argument for the repeal of the Criminal Law Amendment Act.

[1] *Queen's Regulations for the Army for* 1873, Article 180: the whole correspondence is given in the Report of the London Trades Council, June, 1873.

But all this availed the agricultural labourer little. The feverish faith in combination as a panacea for all social ills gradually subsided. The farmers, after their first surprise, met the labourers' demands and successes by a stolid resistance, and took every opportunity to regain their ground. Every winter saw the lock-out used as a means for smashing particular branches of the Union. And in this work of destruction they were aided by their personal intimacy with the labourer. It was easy to drop into the suspicious mind of the uneducated villager a fatal doubt as to the real destination of the pennies which he was sending away to the far-off central treasury. Nor was the Union organisation perfect. Difficulties and delays occurred in rendering aid to threatened branches or victimised men. The clergyman, the doctor, and the village publican were always at hand to encourage distrust of the "paid agitator." Within a very few years most of the independent Unions had ceased to exist, whilst Arch's great national society had dwindled away to a few thousand members, scattered up and down the midland counties, in what were virtually village sick and funeral clubs.

We have, therefore, in the sudden growth and quick collapse of this "revolt of the field," a marked likeness to the meteoric career of the general Trades Unions of 1833–4. But the expansion of the Trade Union Movement in 1871–5 had another point of resemblance to previous periods of inflation. In 1871–5, as in 1833–4 and in 1852, the project of recovering possession of the instruments of production seizes hold of the imagination of great bodies of Trade Unionists. Again we see attempts by trade organisations to establish workshops of their own. The schemes of Co-operative Production of 1871–5 bore more resemblance to those of 1852 than to Owen's crude communism. In the Trade Unionism of 1833–4 the fundamental Trade Union principle of the maintenance of the Standard of Life was overshadowed and absorbed by the Owenite idea of carrying on the

whole industry of the country by national associations of producers, in which all the workmen would be included. But in the more practical times of 1852 and 1871–5 the project of "self-employment" remained strictly subordinate to the main functions of the organisation.[1] Whatever visions may have been indulged in by individual philanthropists, the Trade Union committees of both these periods treated the co-operative workshop either as merely a convenient adjunct to the Union, or as a means of affording, to a certain number of its members, a chance of escape from the conditions of wage-labour.[2] The

[1] See *Die Strikes, die Co-operation, die Industrial Partnerships*, by Dr. Robert Jannasch (Berlin, 1868, 66 pp.).

[2] Amid the great outburst of feeling in favour of Co-operative Production it is difficult to distinguish in every case between the investments of the funds of the Trade Unions in their corporate capacity, and the subscriptions of individual members under the auspices, and sometimes through the agency, of their trade society. The South Yorkshire Miners' Association used £30,000 of its funds in the purchase of the Shirland Colliery in 1875, and worked it on account of the Association. In a very short time, however, the constant loss on the working led to the colliery being disposed of, with the total loss of the investment. The Northumberland and Durham Miners, in 1873, formed a "Co-operative Mining Company" to buy a colliery, a venture in which the Unions took shares, but which quickly ended in the loss of all the capital. Some of the Newcastle engineers on strike for Nine Hours in 1871 were assisted by sympathisers to start the Ouseburn Engine Works, which came to a disastrous end in 1876. In 1875 the Leicester Hosiery Operatives' Union, having 2,000 members, began manufacturing on its own account, and bought up a small business. In the following year a vote of the members decided against such an investment of the funds, and the Union sold out to a group of individuals under the style of the Leicester Hosiery Society. It continues to be successful, but scarcely a tenth of the shareholders are now workers in the concern. Innumerable smaller experiments were set on foot during these years by groups of Trade Unionists with more or less assistance from their societies, but the great majority were quickly abandoned as unsuccessful. In a few cases the business established still exists, but in every one of these any connection with Trade Unionism has long since ceased. In recent years renewed attempts have been made by a few Unions. Several local branches of the National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives, for instance, have taken shares in the Leicester Co-operative Boot and Shoe Manufacturing Society. The London Bassdressers, the

failure of all these attempts belongs, therefore, rather to the history of Co-operation than to that of Trade Unionism. With the ultimate relations between these two working-class movements we shall deal in the next volume. For our present purpose it suffices to note that the loss in these experiments of tens of thousands of pounds finally convinced the officials of the old-established Unions of the impracticability of using Trade Union organisations and Trade Union funds for Co-operative Production. The management of industry by associations of producers still remains the ideal of one school of co-operators, and still periodically captures the imagination of individual Trade Unionists. But other ideals of collective ownership of the means of production have displaced the Owenism of 1833–4 and the "Christian Socialism" of 1852. Of co-operative experiments by Trade Societies, in their corporate capacity, we hear practically no more.[1]

Staffordshire Potters, the Birmingham Tinplate Workers, and a few other societies have also taken shares in co-operative concerns started in their respective trades. Full particulars will be found in the exhaustive work of Mr. Benjamin Jones on *Co-operative Production* (London, 1894).

[1] In one other respect the Trade Union expansion of 1872–4 resembled that of 1833–4. Both periods were marked by an attempt to enrol the women wage-earners in the Trade Union ranks. Ephemeral Unions of women workers had been established from time to time, only to collapse after a brief existence. The year 1872 saw the establishment of the oldest durable Union for women only—the Edinburgh Upholsterers' Sewers' Society. Two years later Mrs. Paterson, the real pioneer of modern women's Trade Unions, began her work in this field, and in 1875 several small Unions among London Women Bookbinders, Upholsteresses, Shirt and Collar Makers, and Dressmakers were established, to be followed, in subsequent years, by others among Tailoresses, Laundresses, &c. Mrs. Emma Ann Paterson (*née* Smith), who was born in 1848, the daughter of a London schoolmaster, served from 1867 to 1873 successively as as Assistant Secretary of the Working Men's Club and Institute Union and the Women's Suffrage Association, and married, in 1873, Thomas Paterson, a cabinetmaker. On a visit to the United States she became acquainted with the "Female Umbrella Makers' Union of New York," and strove, on her return in 1874, to promulgate the idea of Trade Unionism among women workers in the South of England.

On the whole the contrast between the Trade Union expansion of 1873-4 and that of 1833–4 is more significant than any likeness that may be traced between the two periods. The Trade Unionists of 1833–4 aimed at nothing less than the supersession of the capitalist employer; and they were met by his absolute refusal to tolerate, or even to recognise, their organisation. The new feature of the expansion of 1873–4 was the moderation with which the workmen claimed merely to receive some share of the enormous profits of these good times. The employers, on the other hand, for the most part abandoned their objection to recognise the Unions, and even conceded, after repeated refusals, the principle or the regulation of industry by Joint Boards of Conciliation or impartial umpires chosen from outside the trade. From 1867 to 1875 innumerable Boards of Conciliation and Arbitration were established, at which representatives of the masters met representatives of the Trade Unions on equal terms. In fact, it must have been difficult for the workmen at this period to realise with what stubborn obstinacy the employers, between 1850 and 1870, had resisted any kind of intervention in what they had then regarded as essentially a matter of private concern. When the Amalgamated Society of Engineers offered, in 1851, to refer the then pending dispute to arbitration, the master engineers simply ignored the proposal. The Select Committees of the House of Commons in 1856 and 1860 found the workmen's witnesses strongly in favour of arbitration, but the employers sceptical as to

After some newspaper articles, she set on foot the Women's Protective and Provident League (now the Women's Trade Union League), for the express purpose of promoting Trade Unionism, and established in the same year the National Union of Working Women at Bristol. From 1875 to 1886 she was a constant attendant at the Trade Union Congress, and was several times nominated for a seat on the Parliamentary Committee, at the Hull Congress heading the list of unsuccessful candidates. An appreciative notice of her life and work appeared in the *Women's Union Journal*, on her death in December, 1886.

its possibility. Nor did the establishment of Mr. Mundella's Hosiery Board at Nottingham in 1860, and Sir Rupert Kettle's Joint Committees in the Wolverhampton building trades in 1864, succeed in converting the employers elsewhere. But between 1869 and 1875 opinion among the captains of industry, to the great satisfaction of the Trade Union leaders, gradually veered round. "Twenty-five years ago," said Alexander Macdonald in 1875, "when we proposed the adoption of the principle of arbitration, we were then laughed to scorn by the employing interests. But no movement has ever spread so rapidly or taken a deeper root than that which we then set on foot. Look at the glorious state of things in England and Wales. In Northumberland the men now meet with their employers around the common board. . . . In Durhamshire a Board of Arbitration and Conciliation has also been formed; and 75,000 men repose with perfect confidence on the decisions of the Board. There are 40,000 men in Yorkshire in the same position." [1]

But though the establishment, from 1869 onwards, of Joint Boards and Joint Committees represented a notable advance for the Trade Unions, and marked their complete recognition by the great employers, yet this victory brought results which largely neutralised its advantages.[2]

[1] Speech quoted in *Capital and Labour*, June 16, 1875.

[2] The classic work upon the whole subject is Mr. Henry Crompton's *Industrial Conciliation* (London, 1876). It receives detailed examination in the various contributions of Mr. L. L. Price, notably his *Industrial Peace* (London, 1887), and the supplementary papers entitled "The Relations between Industrial Conciliation and Social Reform," and "The Position and Prospects of Industrial Conciliation," published in the *Statistical Society's Journal* for June and September, 1890 (vol. liii. pp. 290 and 420). For an American summary may be consulted Mr. Joseph D. Weeks' *Report on the Practical Working of Arbitration and Conciliation in the Settlement of Differences between Employers and Employés in England* (Harrisburg, 1879), and his paper on *Labour Differences* (New York, 1886). The working of arbitration is well set forth in *Strikes and Arbitration*, by Sir Rupert Kettle (London, 1866); in Mr. Mundella's evidence

As in the case of the political triumphs, the men gained their point at the cost of adopting the intellectual position of their opponents. When the representatives of the employers and the delegates of the men began to meet to discuss the future table of wages, we see the sturdy leaders of many Trade Union battles gradually and insensibly accepting the capitalists' axiom that wages must necessarily fluctuate according to the capitalists' profits, and even with every variation of market prices.[1] At Darlington, for instance, we watch the shrewd leader of the employers, Mr. David Dale, succeeding in completely impressing John Kane and a whole subsequent generation of ironworkers with a firm belief in the principle of regulating wages according to the market price of the product. The high prices of 1870–3 removed the last scruples of the workmen as to the new doctrine. In 1874 a delegate meeting of the Northumberland Miners decided to use the formal expres-

before the Trade Union Commission, 1868; in his address, *Arbitration as a Means of Preventing Strikes* (Bradford, 1868, 24 pp.); and in the lecture by Dr. R. Spence Watson entitled "Boards of Arbitration and Conciliation and Sliding Scales," reported in the *Barnsley Chronicle*, March 20, 1886. An early account of the Nottingham experience is contained in the paper by E. Renals, "On Arbitration in the Hosiery Trades of the Midland Counties" (*Statistical Society's Journal*, December, 1867, vol. xxx. p. 548). See also the volume edited by Dr. Brentano, *Arbeitseinstellungen und Fortbildung des Arbeitvertrags* (Leipzig, 1890), and *Zum Socialen Frieden*, by Dr. von Schulze Gaevernitz (Leipzig, 2 vols., 1892). The whole subject of the relation between Trade Unions and employers will receive examination in a subsequent volume.

[1] The course of prices since 1870 demonstrates how disastrously this principle would have operated for the wage-earners had it been universally adopted. Between 1870 and 1894 the Index Number compiled by the *Economist*, representing the average level of market prices, fell steadily from 2,996 to 2,082, irrespective of the goodness of trade or the amount of the employers' profits. Any exact correspondence between wages and the price of the product would exclude the wage-earners, as such, from all share in the advantages of improvements in production, cheapening of carriage, and the fall in the rate of interest, which might otherwise be turned to account in an advance in the workman's Standard of Life.

sion of the Executive Committee,[1] "that prices should rule wages"—a decision expressly repeated by delegate meetings in 1877 and 1878. In 1879, when prices had come tumbling down, we find the Executive still maintaining that "as an Association we have always contended that wages should be based on the selling price of coal."[2] In an interesting letter dated February 1, 1878, Messrs. Burt, Nixon, and Young (then, as now, the salaried officers of the Northumberland Miners), in describing the negotiations for a Sliding Scale, take occasion to mention that they had agreed with the employers that there should be no Minimum Wage.[3] And though the practical difficulties involved in the establishment of automatic wage-adjustments hindered the spread of Sliding Scales to other industries, the principle became tacitly accepted among whole sections of Trade Unionists. The compulsory maintenance, in good times and bad, of the workman's Standard of Life was thus gradually replaced by faith in a scale of wages sliding up and down according to the commercial speculations of the controllers of the market.

The new doctrine was not accepted without vigorous protests from the more thoughtful working-men leaders. Lloyd Jones, writing in 1874, warns "working men of the danger there is in a principle, that wages should be regulated by market prices, accepted and acted on, and therefore presumably approved of by Trades Unions. These bodies, it is to be regretted, permit it in arbitration, accept it in negotiations with their employers, and thus give the highest sanction they can to a mode of action most detrimental to the cause of labour. . . . The first thing, therefore, those who manage trade societies should settle is a minimum, which they should regard as

[1] Executive Circular, October 12, 1874. [2] Ibid., October 21, 1879; as to the Sliding Scales actually adopted, see Appendix II.

[3] *Miners' Watchman and Labour Sentinel*, February 9, 1878—a quasi-official organ of the Northern Miners, which was published in London from January to May, 1878.

a point below which they should never go. . . . Such a one as will secure sufficiency of food, and some degree of personal and home comfort to the worker; not a miserable allowance to starve on, but living wages. . . . The present agreements they are going into on fluctuating market prices is a practical placing of their fate in the hands of others. It is throwing the bread of their children into a scramble of competition where everything is decided by the blind and selfish struggles of their employers." [1] "I entirely agree," writes Professor Beesly, "with an admirable article by Mr. Lloyd Jones [2] in a recent number of the *Beehive*, in which he maintained that colliers should aim at establishing a minimum price for their labour, and compelling their employers to take that into account as the one constant and stable element in all their speculations. All workmen should keep their eyes fixed on this ultimate ideal." [3]

[1] "Should Wages be Regulated by Market Prices?" by Lloyd Jones, *Beehive*, July 18, 1874; see also his article in the issue for March 14, 1874.

[2] Lloyd Jones, one of the ablest and most loyal friends of Trade Unionism, was born at Bandon, in Ireland, in 1811, the son of a small working master in the trade of fustian-cutting. Himself originally a working fustian-cutter, Lloyd Jones became, like his father, a small master, but eventually abandoned that occupation for journalism. He became an enthusiastic advocate of Co-operation, and in 1850 he joined Thomas Hughes and E. Vansittart Neale in a memorable lecturing tour through Lancashire. A few years later we find him in London, in close touch with the Trade Union leaders, with whom he was on terms of intimate friendship. From the establishment of the *Beehive* in 1861 he was for eighteen years a frequent contributor, his articles being uniformly distinguished by literary ability, exact knowledge of industrial facts, and shrewd foresight. From 1870 until his death in 1886 he was frequently selected by the various Unions to present their case in Arbitration proceedings. At the General Election of 1885 he stood as candidate for the Chester-le-Street Division of Durham, where he was opposed by both the official Liberals and the Conservatives, and was unsuccessful. In conjunction with Mr. J. M. Ludlow, he wrote *The Progress of the Working Classes* (London, 1867), and afterwards published *The Life, Times, and Labours of Robert Owen*, to which a memoir by his son, Mr. W. C. Jones, has since been prefixed.

[3] *Beehive*, May 16, 1874

Nor was this view confined to friendly allies of the Trade Union Movement. We shall have occasion to notice how forcibly both the Cotton Operatives and the Boilermakers protested against the dependence of wages on the fluctuations of the market. Alexander Macdonald himself, though he approved of Joint Committees, instinctively maintained an attitude of hostility to the innovating principle of a sliding scale.[1] And, as we shall presently see, the conflict between Macdonald's teaching with regard to both wages and the hours of labour, and the economic views of the Northumberland and Durham leaders eventually divided the organised miners into two hostile camps.

The Trade Union world of 1871-5 was therefore more complicated, and presented many more difficult internal problems than was imagined, either by the alarmed employers or the triumphant Trade Unionists. It needed only the stress of hard times to reveal to the Trade Unionists themselves that they were not the compact and well-organised army described by the National Federation of Associated Employers, but a congeries of distinct sections, pursuing separate and sometimes antagonistic policies.

The expansion of trade, under the influence of which Trade Unionism, as we have seen, reached in 1873-4 one of its high-water marks, came suddenly to an end. The contraction became visible first in the coal and iron industries, those in which the inflation had perhaps been greatest.[2] The first break occurred in February,

[1] This information we owe to personal friends and colleagues of Macdonald, Messrs. Thomas Burt, M.P., and Ralph Young, who, as we have seen, differed from him on this point, and also on the allied question of Restriction of Output, which Macdonald, throughout his whole career, persistently advocated. See, for instance, his speech at the local conference on the Depression of Trade, *Bristol Mercury*, February 13, 1878.

[2] A useful summary of these events is given in Dr. Kleinwächter's pamphlet, *Zur Geschichte der Englischen Arbeiterbewegung in den Jahren* 1873 *and* 1874 (Jena, 1878, 150 pp.).

1874, when the coalminers of the East of Scotland submitted to a reduction of a shilling a day. During the rest of the year prices and wages came tumbling down in both these staple trades. In January, 1875, a furious conflict broke out in South Wales, where many thousand miners and ironworkers refused to submit to a third reduction of ten per cent. The struggle dragged on until the end of May, when work was resumed at a reduction, not of ten, but of twelve and a half per cent., with an understanding that "any change in the wage rates . . . shall depend on a sliding scale of wages to be regulated by the selling price of coal."[1] In the following year the depression spread to the textile industries, and gradually affected all trades throughout the country. The building trades were, however, still prosperous; and the Manchester Carpenters chose this moment for an aggressive advance movement. The disastrous strike that followed early in 1877, and lasted throughout the year, resulted in the collapse of the General Union of Carpenters and Joiners, at that time the third in magnitude among the societies in the building trades, and left the Manchester building operatives in a state of disorganisation from which they have even now not recovered. In April, 1877, the Clyde Shipwrights demanded an increase of wages, to which the employers replied by a general lock-out of all the operatives engaged in the shipbuilding yards, in the expectation that this would cause pressure on the shipwrights to withdraw their claim. For more than three months the main industry of the Clyde was at a standstill, the dispute being eventually ended, in September, 1877, by submission to the arbitration of Lord Moncrieff, in which the men were completely worsted. In July, 1877, a conflict broke out between the Stonemasons and their employers, in which Messrs. Bull and Co., the contractors for the new law courts in London, caused the bitterest resentment by importing

[1] *Beehive*, June 5, 1875.

German workmen as blacklegs. The demand had originally been for an increase of wages and reduction of hours for the London men; but as the obstinate struggle progressed, it became, in effect, a battle between the Stonemasons' Union and the federated master builders throughout the country. Large levies were raised, and over £2,000 collected from other trade societies; but in March, 1878, after eight months' conflict, the remnant of the strikers returned to work on the employers' terms. The cotton trade, too, was made the scene of one of the greatest industrial struggles on record. After several minor reductions of wages during 1877, which resulted in local strikes, in March, 1878, as the *Times* reports, "all the way through a centre of 70 miles, where 250,000 cotton operatives are employed, notices have been posted giving a month's notice of ten per cent. reduction in wages." A colossal strike ensued, which brought into prominence the rival theories of the cotton operatives and their employers. It was conceded by the men that the millowners were losing money, and that some change had to be made. But as the employers admitted that their losses arose from the glutted state of the market, the operatives contended that the proper remedy was the cessation of the over production; and they therefore offered to accept the ten per cent. reduction on condition that the mills should only work four days a week. A heated controversy ensued, but the millowners persisted in their demand for the unconditional surrender of the men, and refused all proposals for arbitration. The cause of the men was unfortunately prejudiced by serious riots at Blackburn, at which the house of Colonel Raynsford Jackson, the leader of the associated employers, was looted and burnt. After ten weeks' struggle the men went in on the employers' terms.[1]

[1] The operatives' case is well put in the Weavers' Manifesto of June, 1878:—

"Fellow-workers,—We are and have been engaged during the past nine weeks in the most memorable struggle between Capital and

The great struggles of 1875–8 were only the precursors of a general rout of the Trade Union forces. The increasing depression of trade culminated during 1878–9 in a stagnation which must rank as one of the most serious which has ever overtaken British industry. The paralysis of business was intensified, especially in Scotland, by the widespread ruin caused by the failure of the City of Glasgow Bank. From one end of the kingdom to the other great firms became bankrupt, mines and ironworks were stopped, ships lay idle in the ports, and a universal feeling of despondency and distrust spread like a blight into every corner of the industrial

Labour in the history of the world. One hundred thousand factory workers are waging war with their employers as to the best possible way to remove the glut from an overstocked cloth market, and at the same time reduce the difficulties arising from an insufficient supply of raw cotton. To remedy this state of things the employers propose a reduction of wages to the extent of ten per cent. below the rate of wages agreed upon twenty-five years ago. On the other hand, we have contended that a reduction in the rate of wages cannot either remove the glut in the cloth market or assist to tide us over the difficulty arising from the limited supply of raw material. However, this has been the employers' theory, and at various periods throughout the struggle we have made the following propositions as a basis of settlement of this most calamitous struggle :—

"1. A reduction of ten per cent. with four days' working, or five per cent. with five days' working, until the glut in the cloth market and the difficulties arising from the dearth of cotton had been removed.

"2. To submit the whole question of short time or reduction, or both, to the arbitrement of any one or more impartial gentlemen.

"3. To submit the entire question to two Manchester merchants or agents, two shippers conversant with the Manchester trade, and two bankers, one of each to be selected by the employers and the other by the operatives, with two employers and two operatives, with Lord Derby, the Bishop of Manchester, or any other impartial gentleman, as chairman, or, if necessary, referee.

"4. To split the difference between us, and go to work unconditionally at a reduction of five per cent.

"5. Through the Mayor of Burnley, to go to work three months at a reduction of five per cent., and if trade had not sufficiently improved at that time, to submit to a further reduction.

"6. And lastly to an unconditional reduction of seven and a half per cent."

world. Every industry had its crowds of unemployed workmen, the proportion of men on the books of the Trade Unions rising, in some cases, to as much as twenty-five per cent. The capitalists, as might have been expected, chose the moment of trial for attempting to take back the rest of the concessions extorted from them in the previous years. "It has appeared to employers of labour," stated the private circular issued by the Iron Trade Employers' Association in December, 1878, "that the time has arrived when the superfluous wages which have been dissipated in unproductive consumption must be retrenched, and when the idle hours which have been unprofitably thrown away must be reclaimed to industry and profit by being re-directed to reproductive work." The result is reflected in the Trade Union reports. "All over the United Kingdom," states the Monthly Report of the Amalgamated Carpenters for January, 1879, "notices of reductions in wages and extended hours of labour come pouring in from employers with an eagerness and audacity which contrast strangely with the lessons of forbearance and moderation so incessantly dinned into the ears of the British workman in happier times." "At no time in our history," reports the Executive Council of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, "have we had such a number of industrial disturbances throughout the country. Bad trade has prevailed; and our employers, now better organised than ever before, seem to have made it their aim to raise as many points of contention with us as ever possible. In one place sweeping reductions of wages would be carried out or attempted; and in others the rates paid for overtime were sought to be reduced, while in many cases the hours of labour have been attacked, and in the Clyde district successfully, three hours being, as a result, added to the week's work all over Scotland. . . Another notable feature of the depression has been the continued oppression by the employers of the men in the most submissive districts, where conciliatory measures were adopted, and where little objection was made to

any innovation. The Clyde district has been a notable example of this fact, passing in the first instance through two considerable reductions of wages almost passively, only to be almost immediately after the victims of desultory attacks upon the hours question. Irregular attack appears almost to have been the system adopted by the employers in preference to the development of any general movement by their Associations." [1] The years 1878–1880 witnessed, accordingly, a great increase in the number of strikes in nearly all trades,[2] most of which terminated disastrously for the workmen. Sweeping reductions of wages occurred in all industries. The Northumberland Miners, whose normal day's earnings had been 9s. 1½d. in March, 1873, found themselves reduced, in November, 1878, to 4s. 9d. per day, and in January, 1880, to 4s. 4d. Scotch mechanics suffered an even more sudden reduction. The Glasgow Stonemasons, for instance, who had been earning 9d. and 10d. per hour during 1877, dropped by the end of 1878 to 6d. per hour, and found it difficult to find employment even at that figure. A still more dangerous encroachment was made in connection with the hours of labour. Employers on all sides sought to lengthen the working day. The mechanics on the Clyde lost the fifty-one hours week which they had won. The Iron Trades Employers' Association, whose circular we have quoted, resolved upon a general attack on the Nine Hours Day. "It has been resolved," writes the secretary, "by a large

[1] Amalgamated Society of Engineers, &c., Abstract Report of the Council's Proceedings, 1878–9, p. 18.

[2] See *The Strikes of the Past Ten Years*, by G. Phillips Bevan (March, 1880, *Stat. Soc. Journal*, vol. xliii. pp. 35–54). We have ascertained that the strikes mentioned in the *Times* between 1876 and 1889 show the following variations :—

1876	17	1881	20	1886	24
1877	23	1882	14	1887	27
1878	38	1883	26	1888	37
1879	72	1884	31	1889	111
1880	46	1885	20		

majority of the Iron Trades Employers' Association, supported by a general agreement among other employers, to give notice in their workshops that the hours of labour shall be increased to the number prevailing before the adoption of the nine hours limit."[1] The concerted action of the associated employers was, however, baulked by the energy of Mr. John Burnett. Placed in possession of the Circular for a couple of hours, he promptly reproduced it in an ably reasoned appeal to his own members, which was sent broadcast to the press. Publicity proved fatal to the employers' plans, and no uniform or systematic action was taken. Isolated attempts were, however, made in all directions by the master engineers to revert to fifty-seven or fifty-nine hours per week; and only by the most strenuous action was the normal fifty-four hours week retained in "society shops."

Other trades were not equally successful in maintaining even their nominal day. In many towns the carpenters had two or three hours per week added to their working time.[2] More serious was the fact that in numerous minor trades the very conception of a definitely fixed normal day was practically lost. Even among such well-organised trades as the Engineers, Carpenters, and Stonemasons the practice of systematic overtime, coupled with the prevalence of piecework, reduced the normal day to a nullity.[3] In the abundant Trade Union records of these

[1] Secret circular from the London Secretary (Sidney Smith) of the Iron Trades Employers' Association, December, 1878; re-published in Circular of Amalgamated Society of Engineers, January 3, 1879, and in Report of Executive Council for 1878–9, p. 31.

[2] At Manchester, Bolton, Ramsbottom, Wrexham, Falmouth, Aldershot, &c., the hours were thus lengthened.

[3] To the ordinary reader it may be desirable to explain that the Unions have, in most trades, succeeded in establishing the principle of the payment of higher rates for overtime. But in most cases this is limited to workers paid by time, no extra allowance being given to the man working by the piece.

It will be obvious that if a workman, ostensibly enjoying a Nine Hours Day, is habitually required to work overtime, and is paid only

years we watch the progress and results of these economic disasters. The number of men drawing the out-of-work benefit steadily rises, until the societies of Ironfounders and Boilermakers, which, in 1872–73, had scarcely one per cent. unemployed, had in 1879 over twenty per cent. on their funds. The Amalgamated Society of Engineers paid away, under this one head, during the three years 1878–80, a sum of no less than £287,596. The Operative Plumbers had to exclude, in the two years 1880–2, nearly a third of their members for non-payment of contributions. The Ironfounders, who, in 1876, had accumulated a fund of over £5 per member, paid away every penny of it by the end of 1879, and were only saved from actual stoppage by the numerous loans made to the society by its more prosperous members. The Stonemasons' Society drained itself equally dry, and resorted to the same expedient to avoid default. The Scottish societies had to meet the crisis in an even more aggravated form. The total collapse which followed the City of Glasgow Bank failure absolutely ruined all but half a dozen of the Scotch Trade Unions, a blow from which Trade Unionism in Scotland has even yet not recovered.

The year 1879, indeed, was as distinctly a low-water mark of the Trade Union Movement as 1873–4 registered a full tide of prosperity. The economic trials through which Trade Unionism passed in 1879 are only to be paralleled by those through which it had gone in 1839–42. But the solid growth which we have described prevented any such total collapse as marked the previous periods. The depression of 1879 swept, it is true, many hundreds of trade societies into oblivion. The Unions of agricultural labourers, which had sprung up with such

at the normal piecework rate for his work, he obtains no advantage whatever from the nominal fixing of his hours of labour. To many thousands of men in the engineering and building trades the nominal maintenance of the Nine Hours Day meant, in 1878 and succeeding years, no more than this.

mushroom rapidity, either collapsed altogether or dwindled into insignificant benefit clubs. Up and down the country the hundreds of little societies in miscellaneous trades which had flourished during the good years, went down before the tide of adversity. Widespread national organisations shrank up practically into societies of local influence, concentrated upon the strongholds of their industries. The great National Union of Miners, established, as we have seen, in 1862–3, survived, after 1879, only in Northumberland, Durham, and Yorkshire. Its younger rival, the Amalgamated Association of Miners, which had, up to 1875, dominated South Wales and the Midlands, broke up and disappeared. The National Amalgamated Association of Ironworkers, also established in 1862, which, in 1873, numbered 35,000 members in all parts of the country, was reduced, in 1879, to 1,400 members, confined to a few centres in the North of England.[1] In some districts, such as South Wales, Trade Unionism practically ceased to exist.[2] The total membership of the Trade Union Movement returned, it is probable, to the level of 1871. But despite all these contractions the backbone of the movement remained intact. In the engineering and building trades the great national societies, though they were denuded of their reserve funds, retained their membership. Nor was it only the trade friendly societies that weathered the storm. The essentially trade organisations of the cotton operatives, and of the Northumberland and Durham miners,

[1] The lowest point reached in the statistics of the annual Trade Union Congresses was in 1881, when the delegates claimed to represent little more than a third of the numbers of 1874. These statistics of membership are, however, in many respects misleading. The Congress of 1879 was attended by a much smaller number of delegates than any Congress since 1872, and the number of Unions represented was also the smallest since that date.

[2] "Four years ago," writes the president of the Bristol Coopers' Society in 1878, "upwards of 40,000 workmen were in combination in these valleys [South Wales], and to-day not a single Union is in existence throughout the entire district." (Paper at Local Conference on the Depression of Trade, *Bristol Mercury*, February 13, 1878.)

maintained their position with only a temporary contraction of membership. The political organisation of the movement was, moreover, unaffected. The local Trades Councils went on undisturbed. The annual Trade Union Congress continued to meet, and to appoint its standing Parliamentary Committee. In short, though many individual Unions disappeared, and many others saw their balances absorbed and their membership reduced, the trials of 1879 proved that the Trade Union Movement was at last beyond all danger of destruction or collapse, and that the Trade Union organisation had become a permanent element in our social structure.

We see, therefore, that the work which Allan and Applegarth had done towards consolidating the Trade Union Movement had not been fruitless. But along with increasing consolidation and definiteness of purpose had come an increasing differentiation of policy and interest. Each trade was working out its own industrial problems in its way. Whilst the miners and the cotton operatives, for instance, were elaborating their own codes of legislative regulation of the conditions of labour, the engineering and building trades were becoming pledged to the legislative *laisser faire* of their leaders. Under the influence of the able spokesmen of the northern counties the Coalminers and Ironworkers were accepting the principle that wages must follow prices; whilst the Cotton Operatives, and to some extent the Boilermakers,[1] were making a notable stand for the contrary view that the Standard Rate of Wages should be a first charge on industry. And while the miners and cotton operatives regarded their organisations primarily as societies for trade protection, there was growing up among the suc-

[1] See the injunctions of the General Secretary, Monthly Report, March, 1862; Annual Reports, 1882 and 1888. Mr. Robert Knight has consistently opposed "violent fluctuations of wages, at one time a starvation pittance, at another exorbitantly high"; and we understand that negotiations are at present (1894) in progress for a settled normal wage, with narrow limits of deviation on either side.

cessors of the Junta in the iron and building trades a fixed belief that the really "Scientific Trade Unionism" consisted in elaborate friendly benefits and judiciously invested superannuation funds. So long as trade was expanding, and each policy was pursued with success, no antagonism arose between the different sections. The Cotton Operatives cordially approved the Nine Hours Movement of the Engineers, whilst these, in their turn, supported the Factory Bill desired by the Lancashire Spinners. The Miners applauded the gallant stand made by the Cotton Operatives against the reductions of 1877–9, whilst the Cotton Operatives saw no objection to the acquiescence of the Miners in the dependence of wages on prices. And though all Trade Unions regarded with respect the high contributions and accumulated funds of the Amalgamated Engineers, they were equally respectful of the success with which the Northumberland Coalminers, through bad times and good, had for half a generation maintained a strong Union with exclusively trade objects. Thus the divergences of policy, which were destined from 1885 onward to form the battle ground between what has been once more termed the "Old" Unionism and the "New," did not at first prevent cordial co-operation in the common purposes of the Trade Union Movement. It was in the dark days after 1878–9 when every Union suffered reverses, that internal discontent as to Trade Union policy became acute, and a new spirit of criticism arose. Not until the purely trade society, on the one hand, had been found lacking in stability, and the trade friendly society, on the other, had been convicted of apathy in trade matters; not until the Lancashire and Yorkshire Coalminers had been driven to protest against the constant reductions brought about by the sliding scales, and some of the leaders of the Lancashire Cotton Operatives hesitated in their advocacy of the legal day; finally, not until a powerful section of the Miners opposed any further extension of the Mines Regulation Acts, and a

section of the Engineers and building operatives began to advocate the legal fixing of their own labour day;—do we find it declared that "the two systems cannot co-exist; they are contradictory and opposed." [1]

In more than one direction, therefore, the depression of trade was bringing into prominence wide divergences of opinion upon Trade Union policy. But the adverse industrial circumstances of the time were revealing, in certain industries, a more invidious cleavage. As manufacturing processes develop and change with the progress of invention and the substitution of one material for another—iron for wood in shipbuilding, for instance—the skilled members of one trade find themselves superceded for certain work by the members of another. A modern Atlantic liner, practically a luxuriously-fitted, electric-lighted floating hotel, built of rolled steel plates, would obviously not fall within the work of a shipwright like Peter the Great. But the old-fashioned shipwright naturally refused to relinquish without a struggle the right to build ships of every kind. The depression of 1879 was severely felt in the shipbuilding and engineering trades, every one of which had a large percentage of its members unemployed. The societies found, as we have seen, the out-of-work donation a serious drain on their funds, and were inclined to look more narrowly into cases of "encroachment" upon the work which each regarded as the legitimate sphere of its own members. Disputes between Union and Union as to overlap and apportionment of work become, in these years, of frequent occurrence; and to the standing conflict with the employers was added embittered internecine warfare between the men of one branch of trade and those of another. The Engineers complained of the monopoly which the Boilermakers maintained of all work connected with angle-iron. The Patternmakers protested vigorously against the Carpenters presuming to make any engineer-

[1] *Trade Unionism, New and Old*, by Mr. George Howell, M.P. (London, 1891), p. 235.

ing patterns. At Glasgow the Brassfounders objected to the Ironmoulders continuing to make the large brass castings which the workers in brass had, at first, been unable to undertake. The line of demarcation in iron shipbuilding between the work of a shipwright and that of a boilermaker was a constant source of friction. The disregard of the ordinary classification of trades by the authorities of the Royal Dockyards created great discontent among the Engineers, who saw shipwrights put to do fitters' work, and Mr. Broadhurst brought the matter in 1882 before the House of Commons.[1] Nor were the disputes confined to the puzzling question of the lines of demarcation between particular trades. In 1877 the recently formed Union of "Platers' Helpers" complained bitterly to the Trade Union Congress that the whole force of the Boilermakers' Society had been used to destroy their organisation. The Platers' Helpers, it may be explained, constitute a large class of labourers in shipbuilding yards, who are usually employed and paid, not by the owners of the yards, but by members of the Boilermakers' Society. In the building trades numerous cases of friction were occurring between Bricklayers and Masons on the one hand, and the Builders' Labourers on the other. The introduction of terra cotta led to a whole series of disputes between the Bricklayers and the Plasterers as to the trade to which the new work properly belonged. Disputes of this kind were, of course, no new thing. What gave the matter its new importance was the dominance of the great trade friendly societies in the skilled occupations. The loss of employment by individual members became in bad times a serious financial drain on Unions giving out-of-work pay. In place of the bickerings of

[1] House of Commons Journals, Motion of March 14, 1882: "That in the opinion of this House it is detrimental to the public service, fatal to the efficiency of our war ships, and unjust to the fitters in Her Majesty's Dockyards, that superintending leading men should be placed in authority over workmen with whose trades they have no practical acquaintance, or that men should be put to execute work for which they are unsuited either by training or experience."

individual workmen we have the conflicts of powerful societies, each supporting the claim of its own members to do the work in dispute. "When men are not organised in a Trade Union," says the general secretary of a large society, "these little things are not taken much notice of, but the moment the two trades become well organised, each trade is looking after its own particular members' interests. . . ." [1]

We shall attempt, in a later volume, to analyse the history, character, and extent of this rivalry among competing branches of the same trade. Here we need do no more than record its result in weakening the bond of union between powerful sections of the Trade Union world. The local Trades Councils, which might have attained a position of political influence, were always being disintegrated by the disputes of competing trades. The powerful Shipping Trades Council of Liverpool, for instance, which played an important part in Mr. Plimsoll's agitation for a new Merchant Shipping Act, was broken up in 1880 by the quarrel between the separate societies of Shipwrights, Shipjoiners, and House Carpenters over ship work. The minutes of every Trades Council, especially those in seaports, relate innumerable well-intentioned attempts to settle similar disputes, almost invariably ending in the secession of one or other of the contending Unions. These quarrels prevented, moreover, the formation of any effective general federation. An attempt was made in 1875 by the officers of the Amalgamated Engineers, Boilermakers, Ironfounders, and Steam-Engine Makers' Societies to establish a federation for mutual defence against attacks upon the Nine Hours System. After a few months, the disputes between the Engineers and Boilermakers on the one hand, and between the members of the Amalgamated Society and the Steam-Engine Makers'

[1] Evidence of Mr. Chandler, general secretary of Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners. (Labour Commission, 1892, vol. iii. Q. 22,014.)

Society, on the other, led to the abandonment of the attempt.[1] A similar movement initiated by the Boilermakers in 1881 equally failed to get established.[2]

Wider federations met with no better success than those confined to the engineering and shipbuilding trades. The Trade Union Congress repeatedly declared itself in favour of universal brotherhood among Trade Unionists, and the formation of a federal bond between the different societies. But the inherent differences between trade and trade, the numerous distinct types into which societies were divided, the wide divergences as to Trade Union policy which we have been describing, and, above all, the rivalry for members and employment between competing societies in the same industry, rendered any universal federation impossible. After the Sheffield Congress in 1874, representatives of the leading Unions in the iron and building trades set on foot a "Federation of Organised Trade Societies," which all Unions were invited to join for mutual defence. But the Cotton-spinners, with their preference for legislative regulation, refused to have anything to do with a federation which contemplated nothing but strike benefits. The whole scheme was, indeed, more a project of certain Trade Union officials than a manifestation of any general feeling in favour of common action. Each trade was, as we have said, working out its own policy, and attending almost exclusively to its own interests. Under such circumstances any attempt at effective federation must necessarily have been stillborn. Nevertheless the Edinburgh Congress of 1879 called for a renewed attempt; and the Parliamentary

[1] Abstract Report of Amalgamated Engineers, June 30, 1876.

[2] In 1890, however, Mr. Robert Knight, who had been throughout the foremost worker for federation, succeeded in establishing a Federation of the Engineering and Shipbuilding Trades of the United Kingdom, from which the Amalgamated Society of Engineers has held aloof. A large part of the work of the Federal Executive consists, we are informed, of adjusting disputes between Union and Union with regard to overlap and apportionment of work.

Committee circulated to every Trade Union in the kingdom their proposed rules for another "Federation of Organised Trade Societies." To this invitation not half a dozen replies were received.[1] At the Congress of 1882, when the resolution in favour of a universal federation was again proposed, it found little support. The representatives of the local Trades Councils urged that these bodies furnished all that was practicable in the way of federation. Mr. Thomas Ashton, the outspoken representative of the cotton-spinners, was more emphatic. "For years," he said, "the Parliamentary Committee and others had been trying to bring about such an organisation as that mentioned in the resolution, but it had been found utterly impossible. . . . It was all nonsense to pass such a resolution. It was impossible for the trades of the country to amalgamate, their interests were so varied, and they were so jealous with regard to each other's disputes."[2]

The foregoing examination of the internal relations of the Trade Union world between 1875 and 1879, though incomplete, demonstrates the extent to which the movement during these years was dominated by a somewhat narrow "particularism." From 1880 to 1885 the various societies were absorbed in building up again their membership and balances, which had so seriously suffered during the continued depression. The annual Trade Union Congress, the Parliamentary Committee, and the political proceedings of these years constitute practically the only common bond between the isolated and often hostile sections. In all industrial matters the Trade Union world was broken up into struggling groups, destitute of any common purpose, each, indeed, mainly preoccupied with its separate concerns, and frequently running counter to the policy or aims of the rest. The cleavages of interest and opinion among working

[1] When, in 1890, the project of universal federation was revived, the draft rules of 1879 were simply reprinted.

[2] Report of Manchester Congress, 1882.

men proved to be deeper and more numerous than any one suspected. In the following chapter we shall see how an imperfect appreciation of each other's position led to that conflict between the "Old Unionists" and the "New" which for some years bade fair to disintegrate the whole Labour Movement.

CHAPTER VII.

THE OLD UNIONISM AND THE NEW.

[1875–1889.]

SINCE 1875 the Trade Union Congress has loomed before the general public with ever-increasing impressiveness as the representative Parliament of the Trade Union world. To the historical student, on the other hand, it has, during the last twenty years, been steadily declining in significance as an index to the real factors of the Trade Union Movement. Between 1871 and 1875, the period of the struggle for complete legalisation, the Congress concentrated the efforts of the different sections upon the common object they had all at heart. On the accomplishment of that object it became for ten years little more than an annual gathering of Trade Union officials, in which they delivered, with placid unanimity, their views on labour legislation and labour politics. From 1885 onward we shall watch the Congress losing its decorous calm, and gradually becoming the battle-field of contending principles and rival leaders. But throughout its whole career it has, to speak strictly, been representative less of the development of Trade Unionism as such, than of the social and political aspirations of its members.

The reader of the Congress proceedings since 1875 would, for instance, fail to recognise our description of the characteristics of the movement in these years. The predominant feature of the Trade Union world between 1875 and 1885 was, as we have seen, an extreme and

complicated sectionalism. It might therefore have been expected that the annual meeting of delegates from different trades would have been made the debating ground for all the moot points and vexed questions of Trade Unionism, not to say the battle-field of opposing interests. But though the Trade Union Congress, like all popular assemblies, had its stormy scenes and hot discussions, from 1875 to 1885 these episodes arose only on personal questions, such as the conduct of individual members of the committee or the *bona fides* of particular delegates. On all questions of policy or principle before the Congress the delegates were generally unanimous. This was brought about by the deliberate exclusion of all Trade Union problems from the agenda prepared by the Parliamentary Committee. The relative merits of collective bargaining and legislative regulation were, during these years, never so much as discussed. The alternative types of benefit club and trade society were not compared. The difficulties of overlap and apportionment of work were not even referred to. No mention was made of Sliding Scales, Wage-Boards, Piecework Lists, or other expedients for avoiding disputes. Piecework itself, when introduced by a delegate in 1876, was dropped as a dangerous topic. The disputes between Union and Union were regarded by the Committee as outside the proper scope of Congress.[1] In short, the knotty problems of Trade Union organisation, the divergent views as to Trade Union policy, the effect on Trade Unionism of different methods of remuneration—all the critical issues of industrial strife were expressly excluded from the agenda of the Congress.

For the narrow limits thus set to the functions of the Congress there was an historical reason. Arising as it did between 1868 and 1871, when the one absorbing topic

[1] In 1878, for instance, the Parliamentary Committee resolved that Congress ought not to interfere either between the English and Scottish Tailors' Societies, or between the Boilermakers and the Platers' Helpers.

was the relation of Trade Unionism to the law, it had retained the character then impressed upon it of an exclusively political body. For many years its chief use was to give weight to the Parliamentary action of the standing committee, whose influence in the lobby of the House of Commons was directly proportionate to the numbers they were believed to represent. Publicity and advertisement, the first requisites of a successful Congress, were worse than useless without unanimity of opinion. The deliberate refusal of the Trade Union leaders to discuss internal problems in public Congress under such circumstances was not surprising. Most men in their position would have hesitated to let the world know that the apparent solidarity of Trade Unionism covered jealous disputes on technical questions, and fundamental differences as to policy. They easily persuaded themselves that a yearly meeting of shifting delegates was fitted neither to debate technical questions nor to serve as a tribunal of appeal. But these difficulties could have been overcome. The quinquennial delegate meeting of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers secures absolute frankness of discussion by the exclusion of reporters ; and the frequent national conferences of miners achieve the same end by supplying the press with their own abstract of the proceedings. The Miners' Conference of 1863, which we have already described, had shown, too, how successfully a large conference of workmen could resolve itself, for special questions, into private committees of experts, the reports being laid before the whole conference at its public sittings. And the London Society of Compositors, which is governed practically by mass meetings, had, for over half a century, known how to combine detailed investigation of complicated questions with Democratic decisions on principles of policy, by appointing special committees to report to the next subsequent members' meeting. The fact that no such expedients were suggested shows that in these years the jealousy of most workmen of outside interference and their apathy about

questions unconnected with their immediate trade interests, made their leaders unwilling to trust them with real opportunities for full Democratic discussion.

We shall therefore not attempt to reconstruct the Trade Union Movement from the proceedings of its annual congresses. The following brief analysis of their programmes and the achievements of the Parliamentary Committee is meant to show, not the facts as to Trade Union organisation throughout the country, with which we have already dealt, but the political and social ideals that filled the minds of the more thoughtful and better educated working men, and the rapid transformation of these ideals in the course of the last decade.[1]

The mantle of the Junta of 1867–71 had, by 1875, fallen upon a group of able organisers who, for many years, occupied the foremost place in the Trade Union world. Between 1872 and 1875 Allan and Applegarth were replaced by Messrs. Henry Broadhurst, John Burnett, J. D. Prior, and George Shipton, all of whom are still living.[2] These leaders had moulded their methods and policy upon those of the able men who preceded them. It was they, indeed, aided by Alexander Macdonald and Mr. Thomas Burt, who had actually carried through the final achievement of 1875. Like Allan, Applegarth, and Guile, they belonged either to the iron or the building trades, and were permanent officials of Trade Union organisations. A comparison of the private minutes

[1] The Congress, since 1871, has annually elected a Parliamentary Committee of ten members and a secretary. The members of the Committee have always been chosen from the officials of the more important Unions, with a strong tendency to re-elect the same men year after year. Between 1875 and 1889 the composition of the Committee was, in fact, scarcely changed, except through death or the promotion of members to Government appointments. Mr. Henry Broadhurst was for fourteen years annually re-elected secretary without a contest, ceding the post, whilst Under Secretary of State for the Home Department in 1886, to Mr. Shipton.

[2] Odger died in 1877, Guile in 1883, and Coulson (who had retired many years before) in 1893.

of the Parliamentary Committee between 1875 and 1885 with those of the Conference of Amalgamated Trades of 1867–71, reveals how exactly the new "Front Bench" carried on the traditions of the Junta. We see the same shrewd caution and practical opportunism. We notice the same assiduous lobbying in the House of Commons, and the same recurring deputations to evasive Ministers. For the first few years, at least, we watch the Committee in frequent consultation with the same devoted legal experts and Parliamentary friends.[1] Through the skilful

[1] To the counsels of Messrs. Frederic Harrison, E. S. Beesly, H. Crompton, and A. J. Mundella was, from 1873, frequently added that of Mr. (now Justice) R. S. Wright, who rendered invaluable service as a draughtsman. Mr. Crompton has supplied us with the following account of the subsequent separation between the Positivists and the Trade Union leaders :—

"In the year 1881 the connection of the Parliamentary Committee with the Positivists was modified. There was not the same occasion for their services as there had been. After 1883, in which year Mr. F. Harrison and Mr. H. Crompton attended the Congress by invitation, the connection ceased altogether, though there was no breach of friendly relations. Till 1881 there had been entire agreement between them both as to policy and means of action. The policy of the Positivists had been to secure complete legal independence for workmen and their legitimate combinations ; to make them more respected and more conscious of their own work ; to lift them to a higher moral level ; that they should become citizens ready and desirous to perform all the duties of citizenship. The means employed was to consolidate and organise the power of the Trades Societies, through the institutions of the annual Congress and its Parliamentary Committee ; to use this power, as occasion served, for the general welfare as well as for trade interests. That the measures adopted or proposed by the Congress should be thoroughly discussed in the branches, and delegates well posted in the principal questions. To express it shortly—organisation of collective labour and political education of individual workmen.

"The condition of this effective force was that, while it was being used in furtherance of political action, it should be kept quite clear and independent of political parties. The divergence came with the advent of the Gladstonians to office. The Liberal Government began a policy of coercion in Ireland. Combination was to be put down by the very same mechanism which had been invented to repress labour combinations—by the law of conspiracy. The very ruling of Baron Bramwell as to the Tailors' strike was employed to concoct a law to

guidance and indefatigable activity of Mr. Broadhurst the political machinery of the Trade Union Movement was maintained and even increased in efficiency. If during these years the occupants of the "Front Bench" failed to give so decisive a lead to the Labour Movement as their predecessors had done, the fault lay, not in the men or in the machinery, but rather in the programme which they set themselves to carry out.

This programme, laid before all candidates for the House of Commons at the General Election of 1874, was based, as Mr. Prior subsequently declared, on the principle "that all exceptional legislation affecting working men should be swept away, and that they should be placed on precisely the same footing as other classes of the community." [1] Its main items were the repeal of the hated Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1871, and the further legalisation of Trade Unionism. The sweeping triumphs of 1875, and the acceptance by the Conservative Government of the proposals of the Junta, denuded the programme for subsequent years of its most striking proposals. There remained over in this department certain minor amendments of law and procedure which occupied the attention of the Committee for the next few years, and were gradually, by their exertions, carried into effect.[2]

convict Mr. Parnell and his coadjutors. As a result law was laid down by the Irish judges as to political combinations, which is binding in England, and has still to be resisted or abolished. The Positivists endeavoured to the utmost of their ability to rouse the working classes to a sense of the danger of these proceedings, and to offer an uncompromising resistance to the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act. The Parliamentary Committee would have none of it. They no doubt believed that the interests of their clients would be best served by a narrower policy, by seeking the help and favour of the eminent statesmen in office. Instead of a compact, powerful force, holding the balance between the parties and the key of the situation, dictating its terms, they preferred to be the tag end of a party. In the end they did not get much, but the Congress was successfully captured and muzzled by the Gladstonian Government.

[1] Report of Trade Union Congress, Dublin, 1880, p. 15.

[2] The working of the Trade Union Act of 1875 revealed some technical defects in the law, which were remedied by an amending

But one great disability still lay upon working men as such. By the common law of England a person is liable for the results, not only of his own negligence, but also for that of his servant, if acting within the scope of his employment. The one exception is that, whereas to a stranger the master is liable for the negligence of any person whom he employs, to his servant he is not liable for the negligence of a fellow-servant in common employment. By this legal refinement, which dates only from 1837, and which successive judicial decisions have engrafted upon the common law, a workman who suffered injury through the negligence of some other person in the same employment was precluded from recovering that compensation from the common employer which a stranger, to whom the same accident had happened, could claim and enforce.[1] If by the error of a signalman a railway train met with an accident, all the injured passengers could obtain compensation from the railway company; but the engine-driver and guard were expressly excluded from any remedy. What the workman demanded was the abolition of the doctrine of "common employment," and the placing of the employee upon exactly the same footing for compensation as any member of the public.

By the influence of the Miners' National Union and the Amalgamated Society of the Railway Servants (established in 1872) the removal of this disability was, from the first, placed in the foreground of the Trade Union programme. Year after year Employers' Liability Bills

Act in 1876 (39 and 40 Vic. c. 22). Rules for the execution of the Employers and Workmen Act were framed by the Lord Chancellor in the same year.

[1] This defence of "common employment," which practically deprived the workman in large undertakings of any remedy in case of accidents arising through negligence in the works, was first recognised in the case of Priestley *v.* Fowler in 1837 (3 Meeson and Welby). Not until 1868 did the House of Lords, as the final Court of Appeal, extend it to Scotland. The growth of colossal industrial undertakings, in which thousands of workmen were, technically, "in common employment," made the occasional harshness of the law still more invidious.

were brought in by the Trade Union representatives in the House of Commons, only to be met by stubborn resistance from the capitalists of both parties. Through the pertinacity of Mr. Broadhurst a partial reform [1] was obtained from Mr. Gladstone's Government in 1880, in spite of the furious opposition of the great employers of labour sitting on both sides of the House. The responsibility of the employer for insuring his workmen against the risks of their calling was, for the first time, clearly recognised by Parliament. The report of the Parliamentary Committee for 1880 claimed that the main battle on the subject had been fought, and that "time and opportunity only were now wanting for the completion of this work." Since then the promotion of claims for compensation for accidents has been one of the most important functions of Trade Unions; and many of the societies, such as the Bricklayers and Boilermakers, have recovered thousands of pounds for injured members or their relatives.[2] But the doctrine of "common employment," modified by this Act, was by no means abolished. Employers, moreover, were allowed to induce their workpeople to "contract out" of the provisions of the Act.[3]

[1] Act 43 and 44 Vic. c. 52 (1880).

[2] The annual Parliamentary returns show that between three and four hundred cases come into court every year, the amount of compensation actually awarded reaching between £7,000 and £8,000. But a large number of cases are compromised, or settled without litigation. Meanwhile the relative number of accidents has diminished. Whereas in 1877 1 railway employee in 95 was more or less injured, in 1889 the proportion was only 1 in 195. Whereas between 1873 and 1880 1 coalminer in 446 met his death annually, between 1881 and 1890 the proportion was only 1 in 519.

[3] By "contracting out" is meant an arrangement between employer and employed by which the latter relinquish the rights conferred upon them by the Act, and often also their rights under the Common Law. The Act is silent on the subject; but the judges decided, to the great surprise and dismay of the Trade Union leaders, that contracting out was permissible (see Griffiths *v.* Earl of Dudley, 9, Queen's Bench Division, 35). The usual form of "contracting out" was the establishment of a workman's insurance fund to which the workmen were compelled to subscribe, and to which the employer also contributed.

An Employers' Liability Bill, the last remnant of the demands of the Junta, has remained, therefore, from 1872 onward a permanent item in the Trade Union programme.

With the exception of this one proposal the Parliamentary programme of the Trade Union world was framed by the new Front Bench. Curiously devoid of interest or reality, it is important to the political student as showing to what extent the thoughtful and superior workman had, at this time, imbibed the characteristic ideas of middle-class reformers.

The programme of the Parliamentary Committee between 1875 and 1885 falls mainly under three heads. We have first a group of measures the aim of which was the democratisation of the electoral, administrative, and judicial machinery of the State. Another set of reforms had for their end the enabling of the exceptionally thrifty or exceptionally industrious man to rise out of the wage-earning class. A third group of proposals aimed at the legal regulation of the conditions of particular industries.

Complete political Democracy had been for over a century the creed of the superior workmen. It was therefore not unnatural that it should come to the front

Among the coalminers, those of Lancashire, Somerset, and some collieries in Wales generally contracted out. The employees of the London and North-Western, and London and Brighton Railway Companies also contracted out. In one or two large undertakings in other industries a similar course was followed. But in the vast majority of cases employers did not resort to this expedient. Particulars are given in the *Report and Evidence of the Select Committee on Employers' Liability*, 1866; the publications of the Royal Commission on Labour, 1891–4; and *Miners' Thrift and Employers' Liability*, by G. L. Campbell (Wigan, 1891).

In 1893–4 a further amending Bill passed the House of Commons which swept away the doctrine of common employment, and placed the workman with regard to compensation on the same footing as any other person. A clause making void any agreement by which the workman forewent his right of action, or "contracted out," was rejected by the House of Lords, and the Bill was thereupon abandoned.

in the Trade Union Congress. What appears peculiar is the form which this old-standing faith took in the hands of the Front Bench. The Trade Union leaders of 1842 had adopted enthusiastically the "Six Points" of the Charter. Even the sober Junta of 1867–71 had sat with Karl Marx on the committee of the "International," in the programme of which Universal Suffrage was but a preliminary bagatelle. To the Front Bench of 1875–85 Democracy appeared chiefly in the guise of the Codification of the Criminal Law, the Reform of the Jury System, the creation of a Court of Criminal Appeal, and the Regulation of the Summary Jurisdiction of the Magistracy—a curious group of law reforms which it is easy to trace to the little knot of barristers who had stood by the Unions in their hour of trial.[1] We do not wish to depreciate the value of these proposals, framed in the interests of all classes of the community; but they were not, and probably were never intended to be, in any sense a democratisation of our judicial system.[2] When the Congress dealt with electoral reform it got no further than the assimilation of the county and borough fran-

[1] The legal advisers of the Junta realised that the triumph of 1875, though it resulted in a distinct strengthening of the Trade Union position, was mainly a moral victory. Though Trade Unions were made legal, the law of conspiracy was only partially reformed, whilst that relating to political combinations, unlawful assemblies, sedition, &c., remained, as it still remains, untouched. Expert lawyers knew in how many ways prejudiced tribunals might at any time make the law oppressive. The legal friends of Trade Unionism desired, therefore, to utilise the period of political quiet in simplifying the criminal law, and in removing as much of the obsolete matter as was possible. And though State Trials recommenced in Ireland in 1881, the interval had been well spent in clearing away some of the grosser evils.

[2] In the proposed reform of the Jury laws, for instance, the Parliamentary Committee for several years did not venture to ask explicitly for that payment of jurymen which alone would enable working men to serve, and contented themselves with suggesting a lowering of the qualification for juryman. In 1876, indeed, Mr. John Burnett, a prominent member of the Committee, strongly opposed the Payment of Jurymen on the ground that it might create a class of professional jurors (Trade Union Congress Report, 1876, p. 14).

chise—already a commonplace of middle-class Liberalism. The student of Continental labour movements will find it difficult to believe that in the representative Congress of the English artisans, amendments in favour of Manhood Suffrage were even as late as 1882 and 1883 rejected by large majorities.[1] Nor did the Parliamentary Committee put even the County Franchise into their own programme until it had become the battle cry of the Liberal party at the General Election of 1880. The Extension of the Hours of Polling becomes a subject of discussion from 1878 onward, but the Payment of Election Expenses does not come up until 1883, and Payment of Members not until 1884.

Scarcely less significant in character were the measures of social reform advocated during these years. The prominent Trade Unionists had been converted, as we have already had occasion to point out, to the economic Individualism which at this time dominated the Liberal party. A significant proof of this unconscious conversion is to be found in the unanimity with which a Trade Union Congress could repeatedly press for such "reforms" as Peasant Proprietorship, the purchase by the artisan of his own cottage, the establishment of "self-governing workshops," the multiplication of patents in the hands of individual workmen, and other changes which would cut at the root of Trade Unionism or any collective control of the means of production. For whatever advantages there might be in turning the agricultural labourer into a tiny freeholder, it is obvious that under such a system no Agricultural Labourers' Union could exist. However useful it may be to make the town artisan independent of a landlord, it has been proved beyond controversy that wage-earning owners of houses lose that perfect mobility which enables them, through their Trade Union, to boycott the bad employer or desert the low-paying district. And we can imagine the dismay

[1] See, for instance, the report of the 1876 Congress, p. 30; that of the 1882 Congress, p. 37; and that of the 1883 Congress, p. 41.

with which the leaders of the Nine Hours Movement would have discovered that any considerable proportion of the engineering work of Newcastle was being done in workshops owned by artisans whose interests as capitalists or patentees conflicted with the common interests of all the workers.

In no respect, however, does the conversion of the Trade Union leaders to middle-class views stand out more clearly than in their attitude to the clamour from the workers in certain industries for the legal protection of their Standard of Life. From time immemorial one of the leading tenets of Trade Unionism has been the desirability of maintaining by law the minimum Standard of Life of the workers, and it was still steadfastly held by two important sections of the Trade Union world, the Cotton Operatives and the Coalminers. But to the Parliamentary Committee of 1875–85, as to the Liberal legislators, every demand for securing the conditions of labour by legislation appeared as an invidious exception, only to be justified by the special helplessness or incompetency of the applicants. Nevertheless, many of the trades succeeded in persuading Congress to back up the particular sectional legislation they desired. The Tailors asked, on the one hand, for the extension of the Factory Acts to home workers, and, on the other, for compensation out of public funds when interfered with by the sanitary inspector. The Bakers complained with equal pertinacity of the lack of public inspection of bakehouses, and of the hardships of their regulation by the Smoke Preventive Acts. The London Cabmen sought the aid of Congress, not against their employers, the cab proprietors, but against the public. The men in charge of engines and boilers demanded that no one should be allowed to work at their trade without obtaining from the Government a certificate of competency. In the absence of any fixed or consistent idea of the collective interest of the wage-earning class, or of Trade Unionists as such, every proposal that any section demanded for itself was accepted

with equanimity by the Congress, and passed on to the Parliamentary Committee to carry out, however inconsistent it might be with the general principles that swayed their minds.[1]

It is not difficult to understand why, with such a programme, the Trade Union world failed, between 1876 and 1885, to exercise any effective influence upon the House of Commons. A few concessions to the wage-earners were, indeed, obtained from the Government. The Employers' Liability Act of 1880, to which we have already referred, represented, in spite of all its deficiencies, a new departure of considerable importance. Useful little clauses protecting the interests of the wage-earners were, through Mr. Broadhurst's pertinacity, inserted in Mr. Chamberlain's Bankruptcy Act and in his Joint Stock Companies Act.[2] But it was left to Charles Bradlaugh, who had never been a Trade Unionist, to initiate the useful law prohibiting the payment of wages in public-houses, though when it was introduced the Parliamentary Committee (observing that it was unnecessary in respect of organised trades) gave it a mild support. Bradlaugh it was, too, who in 1887 got passed the amendment of the law against Truck—a subject which the Parliamentary Committee had, in 1877, dismissed from their programme on the ground that they

[1] In this connection may be mentioned the extensive agitation promoted by Mr. Samuel Plimsoll for further legislation to prevent the loss of life at sea. At the 1873 Trade Union Congress Mr. Plimsoll distributed copies of his book, *Our Merchant Seamen*, and enlisted, during the next three years, practically the whole political force of the Trade Union Movement in support of his Merchant Shipping Acts Amendment Bill. The "Plimsoll and Seamen's Fund Committee," of which Mr. George Howell became secretary, received large financial help from the Unions, the South Yorkshire Miners' Association voting, in 1873, a levy of a shilling per member, and contributing over £1,000. The Parliamentary Committee gave Mr. Plimsoll's Bill a place in their programme for the General Election of 1874, and this Trade Union support contributed largely to Mr. Plimsoll's success in passing a temporary Act in 1875, and permanent legislation in 1876, against the combined efforts of a strong Conservative Government and the shipowners on both sides of the House.

[2] Congress Reports, 1882 and 1883.

were unable, in the trades of which they had knowledge, to find sufficient evidence of its necessity.[1] But the failure of the Parliamentary Committee to induce the Government of the day to legislate for wage-earners as such, was naturally most patent in that group of reforms which dealt with the legal regulation of the conditions of labour. To the great consolidating Factory Bill of 1878 they found only four small amendments to propose; and of these only one was carried.[2] The "Sweating System" of home work against which the Tailors and Bootmakers were suggesting stringent but, as we venture to think, ill-considered legislation was permitted to expand free from all regulation. The bakehouses, too, were allowed to slip virtually out of inspection. Deputation after deputation waited on the Home Secretary to press for an increase in the number of factory inspectors, only to be met with the apparently unanswerable argument that it would cost money which the poor taxpayers could ill spare, until the astute and practical leaders of the Lancashire Cotton Operatives grew tired of the monotonous regularity with which their resolutions in favour of further factory inspection and more stringent regulations of the conditions of their trade were passed by Congress, and the little assistance which this endorsement procured for them. A "Northern Counties Factory Act Reform Association" was established in 1886, to do the work which the Trade Union Congress and its Parliamentary Committee had failed to accomplish. We have, in fact, only one important achievement of the Parliamentary Committee to record in this department of social reform. For years Congress had passed emphatic resolutions in favour of the selection of practical working men as Factory Inspectors. Great was the jubilation at the appointment, in 1882, of Mr. J. D. Prior, General Secretary of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters, and a

[1] Parliamentary Committee's Report, September 17, 1877.

[2] That extending to factory scales and measures, the provisions of the Weights and Measures Act relating to inspection, &c.

member of the Parliamentary Committee, to the post of Inspector.[1]

In matters of more general interest the Trade Union leaders were not more successful, though the attempt to reform the law and its administration resulted in some minor improvements. The first outcome of the projects for law reform so dear to the Congresses of 1876–80 was the Justices' Clerks Act of 1877, which enabled magistrates to remit costs. The passing of the Summary Jurisdiction Act of 1879, which gave defendants the right to claim trial before a jury whenever the penalty exceeded three months' imprisonment, was, Mr. Howell observes, "materially aided by the action of Congress." But it is needless to inform the reader that the Criminal Law never got itself codified, or the Court of Criminal Appeal established. To this day juries continue to be drawn exclusively from the upper and middle classes. The long agitation for the abolition of the unpaid magistracy ended in an anti-climax. The Liberal Government of 1884 left the system unaltered, but placed four Trade Union leaders upon the magisterial bench in certain Lancashire boroughs, a precedent since followed by successive Lord Chancellors.

In one direction the Parliamentary Committee saw their hopes fully accomplished. Their adoption of the particular projects of electoral reform advocated by the Liberal party enabled them to render effective help in the passing of the Acts of 1885, which assimilated the County and the Borough Franchise, effected a redistribution of seats, and made the extended hours of polling universal. But the desire of successive Congresses for effective labour representation is baulked even to-day by the extortion from candidates of heavy election expenses, and by the refusal to provide payment for service in Parliament and other public bodies. On the burning question of the land, the Parliamentary Committee supported with con-

[1] The appointment was first offered to Mr. Broadhurst, who elected to continue his work as Secretary of the Parliamentary Committee.

scientious fervour Mr. Gladstone's Irish policy of creating small freeholds, and enthusiastically endorsed the proposals of Mr. Chamberlain for the extension of similar legislation to Great Britain. The same spirit no doubt entered into their support of the provisions of Mr. Chamberlain's Patent Act, designed to facilitate the taking out of patents by poor inventors. To sum up the situation, we may say that the resolutions of the Trade Union Congress on questions of general politics between 1880 and 1884 were successfully pressed on the legislature only in so far as they happened to coincide with the proposals of the Liberal party. With the one great exception of the Employers' Liability Act, nothing seems really to have called out the full energies of the leaders. The manifestoes and published memoranda of the Parliamentary Committee during these years do not differ either in tone or in substance from the speeches and articles in which Mr. Chamberlain and other Radical capitalists were propounding a programme of individualist Radicalism. In fact, the draft "Address to the Workmen of the United Kingdom," which the Parliamentary Committee, in anticipation of the General Election, submitted to the Congress of 1885, fell far short of Mr. Chamberlain's "Unauthorised Programme." It occurred neither to the Parliamentary Committee nor to the Congress to suggest the obvious answer to Sir William Harcourt's financial objection to increased factory inspection. No trace is to be discovered of any consciousness on the part of the Trade Union leaders of the existence of a very substantial tribute annually levied upon the industrial world under the names of rent and interest. And even Mr. Chamberlain's modest and tentative proposals of these years, relating to the payment, by the recipients of that tribute, of some contribution by way of "ransom," found no echo in the official programme of the Trade Union world. Finally, though the Congress had adopted Payment of Election Expenses in 1883, and Payment of Members in 1884, the Parlia-

mentary Committee omitted both these propositions from its draft, and, like Mr. Gladstone, could not even bring itself to ask for Free Education. The three latter points were added to the draft by the Congress.

The assimilation of the political creed of the Trade Union leaders with that of the official Liberal party was perfectly sincere. We have already described, in the preceding chapter, how the Junta had begun to be unconsciously converted from the traditional position of Trade Unionism to the principle of Administrative Nihilism, then dominant in the middle class. It is unnecessary for us to argue whether this conception of the functions of law and government is or is not an adequate view of social development. The able and conscientious men who formed the Front Bench of the Trade Union Congress of 1876–85 had grown up without any alternative political theory, and had accordingly erected the objection to legislative interference or Governmental administration into an absolute dogma.[1]

Laisser faire, then, was the political and social creed of the Trade Union leaders of this time. Up to 1885 they undoubtedly represented the views current among the rank and file. Ten years ago all observers were agreed that the Trade Unions of Great Britain would furnish an impenetrable barrier against Socialistic projects. To-day we find the whole Trade Union world permeated with Collectivist ideas, and, as the *Times* records, the Socialist party supreme in the Trade Union Congress.[2] This

[1] It may be mentioned that the Trade Union Congress, which at first had welcomed addresses from the middle and upper class friends of Trade Unionism, was, between 1881 and 1883, gradually restricted to Trade Unionists. At the Nottingham Congress in 1883, when Mr. Frederic Harrison proposed to take part in the discussion on the Land Question, he was not permitted to do so; and this rule has since been rigidly adhered to.

[2] *Times* leader on the Congress of Belfast, September 11, 1893, which deplores the remarkable "subservience to Mr. John Burns and his friends" manifested by the Congress—a subservience marked by the election of Mr. Burns for the Parliamentary Committee at the

revolution in opinion is the chief event of recent Trade Union history ; and we propose to analyse in some detail the circumstances which, in our opinion, have co-operated to bring it about. We shall trace the beginnings of a new intellectual ferment in the Trade Union world. We shall watch this working on minds awakened by an industrial contraction of exceptional character. We shall see it resulting in the revelation of hideous details of poverty and degradation, for which deepening social compunction imperatively demanded a remedy. We shall describe the recrudescence of a revolutionary Utopianism like the Owenism of 1833–4. We shall trace the gradual schooling of the impracticable elements into a sobered and somewhat bureaucratic Collectivism ; and finally, we shall watch the rapid diffusion of this new faith throughout the whole Trade Union world.[1]

If we had to assign to any one event the starting of the new current of thought, we should name the wide circulation in Great Britain of Mr. Henry George's "Progress and Poverty" during the years 1880–2. The optimist and aggressive tone of the book, in marked contrast with the complacent quietism into which the

head of the poll, and by the adoption of a programme which included the nationalisation of the land and other means of production and distribution.

[1] The following description of the rise of the "New Unionism" is based upon the minutes and reports of Trade Union organisations, the files of *Justice*, the *Labour Elector*, the *Trade Unionist*, the *Cotton Factory Times*, the *Workman's Times*, and other working-class journals. The documentary evidence has been elucidated and supplemented by the reminiscences of most of the principal actors in the movement, and by the personal recollections of the authors themselves, one of whom, as a member of the Fabian Society, observed the transformation from the Socialist side, whilst the other, as a disciple of Mr. Herbert Spencer, and a colleague of Mr. Charles Booth, was investigating the contemporary changes from an Individualist standpoint. The authors' own participation in the change of opinion which they are describing, whilst it may have enabled them to throw fresh light on the subject, may, on the other hand, deprive their narrative of the critical impartiality which they have throughout this historical volume striven to maintain.

English working-class movement had sunk, and the force of the popularisation of the economic Theory of Rent, sounded the dominant note alike of the "New Unionism" and of the English Socialist Movement of to-day. Mr. George made, it is true, no contribution to the problems of industrial organisation; nor had he, outside of the "Single Tax" on land values, any intention of promoting a general Collectivist movement. But he succeeded, where previous writers had failed, in widely diffusing among all classes a vivid appreciation of the nature and results of the landlord's appropriation of economic rent. It is, in our judgment, the spread among the town artisans of this conception of rent which has so largely transformed the economic views of the Trade Union world, and which is shifting the lines of party politics. The land question in particular has been completely revolutionised. Instead of the Chartist cry of "Back to the Land," still adhered to by rural labourers and belated politicians, the town artisan is thinking of his claim to the unearned increment of urban land values, which he now watches falling into the coffers of the great landlords.

But if Mr. Henry George gave the starting push, it was the propaganda of the Socialists that got the new movement under way. The Socialist party, which became reorganised in London between 1881 and 1883, after practically a generation of quiescence, merged the project of Land Nationalisation in the wider conception of an organised Democratic community in which the collective power and the collective income should be consciously directed to the common benefit of all.[1] Whilst Mr. George was, almost in his own despite, driving Peasant Proprietorship and Leasehold Enfranchisement out of the political field, the impressive description which Karl Marx had given of the effects of the Industrial Revolution was interpreting to the thoughtful workman the every-day incidents of industrial life. It needed no Socialist to convince the artisan in any of the

[1] See Mr. H. M. Hyndman's *England for All* (London, 1881).

great industries that his chance of rising to be a successful employer was becoming daily more remote. It required no agitator to point out that amid an enormous increase in wealth production the wages of the average mechanic remained scarcely sufficient to bring up his family in decency and comfort, whilst whole sections of his unskilled fellow-workers received less than the barest family maintenance. Even the skilled mechanic saw himself exposed to panics, commercial crises, and violent industrial dislocations, over which neither he nor his Trade Union had any control, and by which he and his children were often reduced to destitution. But it was the Socialists who supplied the workman with a plausible explanation of these untoward facts. Through the incessant lecturing of Mr. Hyndman and other disciples of Karl Marx, working men were taught that the impossibility of any large section of the working class becoming their own employers was due, not to lack of self-control, capacity, or thrift, but to the Industrial Revolution, with its improvement of mechanical processes, its massing of capital, and the consequent extinction of the small *entrepreneur* by great industrial establishments. In this light the divorce of the manual workers from the ownership of the means of production was seen to be no passing phase, but an economic development which must, under any system of private control of industry, become steadily more complete. And it was argued that the terrible alterations of over-production and commercial stagnation, the anomaly that a glut of commodities should be a cause of destitution, were the direct result of the management of industry with a view to personal profit, instead of to the satisfaction of public wants.

The economic circumstances of the time supplied the Socialist lecturers with dramatic illustrations of their theory. The acute depression of 1878–9 had been succeeded by only a brief and partial expansion during 1881–3. A period of prolonged though not exceptional contraction followed, during which certain staple trades

experienced the most sudden and excessive fluctuations. In the great industry of shipbuilding, for instance, the bad times of 1879 were succeeded by a period during which trade expanded by leaps and bounds, more than twice the tonnage being built in 1883 than in 1879. In the very next year this enormous production came suddenly to an end, many shipbuilding yards being closed and whole towns on the north-east coast finding their occupation for the moment destroyed. The total tonnage built fell from 1,250,000 in 1883 to 750,000 in 1884, 540,000 in 1885, and to the still lower total of 473,000 in 1886. Thousands of the most highly skilled and best organised mechanics, who had been brought to Jarrow or Sunderland the year before, found themselves reduced to absolute destitution, not from any failure of their industry, but merely because the exigencies of competitive profit-making had led to the concentration in one year of the normal production of two. "In every shipbuilding port," says Mr. Robert Knight in the Boilermakers' Annual Report for 1886, "there are to be seen thousands of idle men vainly seeking for an honest day's work. The privation that has been endured by them, their wives and children, is terrible to contemplate. Sickness has been very prevalent, whilst the hundreds of pinched and hungry faces have told a tale of suffering and privation which no optimism could minimise or conceal. Hide it—cover it up as we may, there is a depth of grief and trouble the full revelations of which, we believe, cannot be indefinitely postponed. The workman may be ignorant of science and the arts, and the sum of his exact knowledge may be only that which he has gained in his closely circumscribed daily toil; but he is not blind, and his thoughts do not take the shape of daily and hourly thanksgiving that his condition is not worse than it is; he does not imitate the example of the pious shepherd of Salisbury Plain, who derived supreme contentment from the fact that a kind Providence had vouchsafed him salt to eat with his potatoes. He sees

the lavish display of wealth in which he has no part. He sees a large and growing class enjoying inherited abundance. He sees miles of costly residences, each occupied by fewer people than are crowded into single rooms of the tenement in which he lives. He cannot fail to reason that there must be something wrong in a system which effects such unequal distribution of the wealth created by labour."

Other skilled trades had, between 1883 and 1887, a similar though less dramatic experience. At the International Trade Union Congress of 1886, Mr. James Mawdsley, the cautious leader of the Lancashire cotton-spinners, speaking as a member of the Parliamentary Committee on behalf of the English section, described the state of affairs in England in the following terms:— "Wages had fallen, and there was a great number of unemployed. . . . Flax mills were being closed every day . . . All the building trades were in a bad position; . . . ironfoundries were in difficulties, and one-third of the shipwrights were without work. . . . Steam-engine makers were also slack, except those manufacturers who exported to France, Germany, and Austria. With a few rare exceptions, the depression affecting the great leading trades was felt in a thousand and one occupations. Seeing that there was a much larger number of unemployed, the question naturally presented itself as to whether there was any chance of improvement. He considered there was no chance of improvement so long as the present state of society continued to exist. . . . He did not understand their Socialism, he had not studied it as perhaps he ought to have done. The workmen of England were not so advanced as the workmen of the Continent. Nevertheless they, at least, possessed one clear conception, they realised that the actual producers did not obtain their share of the wealth they created." [1] We see the same spirit spreading even to the most Con-

[1] Report of the International Trades Union Congress at Paris, 1886, by Adolphe Smith (London, 1886).

servative and exclusive trades. "To our minds," writes the Central Secretary of the powerful Union of Flint Glass Makers, "it is very hard for employers to attempt to force men into systems by which they cannot earn an honourable living. These unjust attempts to grind down the working men will not be tolerated much longer, for revolutionary changes are beginning to show themselves, and important matters affecting the industrial classes will speedily come to the front. Why, for example, should Lord Dudley inherit coalmines and land producing £1,000 a day while his colliers have to slave all the week and cannot get a living?" [1]

The discontent was fanned by well-intentioned if somewhat sentimental philanthropists, who were publishing their experiences in the sweated industries and the slums of the great cities. The *Bitter Cry of Outcast London* and other gruesome stories were revealing, not only to the middle class, but also to the "aristocracy of labour," whole areas of industrial life which neither Trade Unionism nor Co-operation could hope to reach. With the middle class the compunction thus excited resulted in elaborate investigations issuing in inconclusive reports. A Royal Commission on the Housing of the Poor produced nothing more effectual than a slight addition to the existing powers of vestries and Town Councils. Another on the Depression of Trade was absolutely barren. A Select Committee of the House of Lords on the Poor Law failed even to discover the problems to be solved. Another on the Sweating System ended, after years of delay, in an accurate diagnosis of the evil, coupled with a confession of inability to cope with it. In 1885 an Edinburgh philanthropist provided a thousand pounds for a public conference to inquire whether some more equitable system of industrial remuneration could not be suggested: a conference which served only to cast doubt on such philanthropic schemes as profit-sharing and the "self-governing workshop," whilst bringing into promi-

[1] *Flint Glass Makers' Magazine*, November, 1884.

nence the Socialist proposals.[1] And, more important than all these, Mr. Charles Booth, a great merchant and shipowner, began in 1886, at his own expense, a systematic statistical inquiry into the actual social condition of the whole population of London, the impressive results of which have since reverberated from one end of the kingdom to the other.[2]

The outcome of the investigations thus set on foot was an incalculable impetus to social reform. They had, for the most part, been undertaken in the expectation that a sober and scientific inquiry would prove the exceptional character of the harrowing incidents laid bare by the philanthropists, and unsparingly quoted by the new agitators. But to the genuine surprise alike of the economists and the Trade Union leaders, the lurid statements of the sensationalists and the Socialists were, on the whole, borne out by the statistics. The stories of unmerited misery were shown to be, not accidental exceptions to a general condition of moderate well-being, but typical instances of the average existence of great masses of the population. The "sweater" turned out to be, not an exceptionally cruel capitalist, but himself the helpless product of a widespread degeneration which extended over whole industries. In the wealthiest and most productive city in the world, Mr. Charles Booth, after an exhaustive census, was driven to the conclusion that a million and a quarter persons fell habitually below his "Poverty Line." Thirty-two per cent. of the whole population of London (in some large districts over sixty per cent.) were found to be living in a state of chronic poverty, which precluded not only the elementary conditions of civilisation and citizenship, but was incompatible with physical health or

[1] *Report of the Industrial Remuneration Conference* (London, 1885).

[2] Some of the results of seven years of patient labour by Mr. Booth and his assistants are embodied in the magnificent work, *Labour and Life of the People* (London, 1st edition, 2 vols., 1889–91; 2nd edition, 4 vols., 1893), and in *Pauperism and the Endowment of Old Age* (London, 1893).

industrial efficiency. Moreover, Mr. Charles Booth's figures and the report of the House of Lords Committee on Sweating disproved, once for all, the comfortable assumption that all destitution originated in drink or vice. It was impossible, to use the well-known phrase of Burke, to draw an indictment against a third of the people of London, or against two-thirds of the East End.

The daily experience of whole sections of the wage-earners during these years of depression, and the statistical inquiries of the middle class, appeared, therefore, to justify the Socialist indictment of the capitalist system. What was perhaps of more effect was the fact that the Socialists alone seemed inspired by faith in a radical transformation of society, and that they alone offered a solution which had not yet been tried and found wanting. Prior to 1867 it had been possible to ascribe the evil state of the wage-earners to the malignant influence of class government and political exclusion. Cobden and Bright had eloquently described the millennium to be reached through untaxed products. For a whole generation the leaders of a consolidated Trade Unionism had demonstrated the advantageous terms that the artisan might, through collective bargaining and a reserve fund, wring from his employers. But in face of a protracted lack of employment, the extended suffrage, Free Trade, and well-administered Trade Unions proved alike helpless. Twenty years of the franchise had left the town artisan still at the mercy of commercial gamblers and exposed to the extortions of the slum landlord. A Liberal Government was actually in power, wielding an enormous majority, but manifesting no keen desire to remedy the results of economic inequality. No attempt was being made to redress even the admitted wrongs of the necessitous taxpayer. The Tea Duty remained untouched; the Land Tax was left unreformed; whilst the larger question of using some of the nation's wealth to provide decent conditions of existence for the great bulk of the people was not even mooted. A further Extension of the Franchise,

Free Trade, and Popular Education, were still the only social and economic panaceas that the Liberal party had to offer. But cheapness of commodities was of no use to the workman who was thrown out of employment; and the spread of education served but to increase his discontent with existing social conditions, and his ability to understand the theoretic explanations and practical proposals of the new school of reformers.

The working man found no more comfort in Trade Unionism than in party politics. The mason, carpenter, or ironfounder saw, for instance, his old and powerful Trade Society reduced to little more than a sick and burial club, refusing all support to strikes even against reductions of wages and increase of hours, and only maintaining its out-of-work benefit by running heavily into debt to its more prosperous members.[1] As the lean years followed one on another, he saw the benefits reduced, the contributions raised, and numbers of staunch Unionists left high and dry as members "out of benefit." The trade friendly society—the "scientific Trade Unionism" of the Front Bench—was in fact becoming rapidly discredited. Messrs. John Burns and Tom Mann, young and energetic members of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, were, between 1884 and 1889, vigorously denouncing, up and down the country, the supineness of their great amalgamated Union. "How long, how long," appeals Tom Mann to the Trade Unionists in 1886,[2] "will you be content with the present half-hearted policy of your Unions? I readily grant that

[1] The funds of the Stonemasons were completely exhausted by the great strike of 1878. In January, 1879, the Society determined, on a proposition submitted by the Central Executive, to close all pending disputes (including a general strike at Sheffield against a heavy reduction without due notice); and between that date and March, 1885, though many of the branches struggled manfully, and in some cases successfully, against repeated reductions of wages, increases of hours, or infringements of the local bye-laws, no strike whatever was supported from the Society's funds. The case of the Stonemasons is typical of the other great trade friendly societies.

[2] *What a Compulsory Eight Hours Working Day means to the Workers*, by Tom Mann (London, 1886, 16 pp.).

good work has been done in the past by the Unions; but, in Heaven's name, what good purpose are they serving now? All of them have large numbers out of employment even when their particular trade is busy. None of the important societies have any policy other than that of endeavouring to keep wages from falling. The true Unionist policy of *aggression* seems entirely lost sight of: in fact, the average Unionist of to-day is a man with a fossilised intellect, either hopelessly apathetic, or supporting a policy that plays directly into the hands of the capitalist exploiter. . . . I take my share of the work of the Trade Union to which I belong; but I candidly confess that unless it shows more vigour at the present time (June, 1886) I shall be compelled to take the view—against my will—that to continue to spend time over the ordinary squabble-investigating, do-nothing policy will be an unjustifiable waste of one's energies. I am sure there are thousands of others in my state of mind." [1]

[1] Mr. Tom Mann, one of the most attractive figures in the New Unionist Movement, was born at Foleshill, Warwickshire, in 1856, and apprenticed in an engineering shop at Birmingham, whence he came to London in 1878, and joined the Amalgamated Society of Engineers. Eagerly pursuing his self-education, he became acquainted first with the Co-operative Movement, and then with the writings of Mr. Henry George. In 1884 he visited the United States, where he worked for six months. On his return he joined the Battersea Branch of the Social Democratic Federation, and quickly became one of its leading speakers. His experience of the evils of overtime made the Eight Hours Day a prominent feature in his lectures, and in 1886 he published his views in the pamphlet, *What a Compulsory Eight Hours Working Day means to the Workers* (London, 1886, 16 pp.), of which several editions have been printed. In the same year he left his trade in order to devote himself to the provincial propaganda of the Social Democratic Federation, spending over two years incessantly lecturing, first about Tyneside, and then in Lancashire. Returning to London early in 1889, he assisted in establishing the Gasworkers' Union, and in organising the great dock strike, on the termination of which he was elected president of the Dockers' Union. For three years he applied himself to building up this organisation, deciding to resign in 1892, when he became a candidate for the General Secretaryship of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers. After an

"Constituted as it is," writes John Burns in September, 1887,[1] "Unionism carries within itself the source of its own dissolution. . . . Their reckless assumption of the duties and responsibilities that only the State or whole community can discharge, in the nature of sick and superannuation benefits, at the instance of the middle class, is crushing out the larger Unions by taxing their members to an unbearable extent. This so cripples them that the fear of being unable to discharge their friendly society liabilities often makes them submit to encroachments by the masters without protest. The result of this is that all of them have ceased to be Unions for maintaining the rights of labour, and have degenerated into mere middle and upper class rate-reducing institutions." [2]

exciting contest, during which he addressed meetings of the members in all the great engineering centres, he failed of success only by 951 votes on a poll of 35,992. In the meantime he had been appointed, in 1891, a member of the Royal Commission on Labour, to which he submitted a striking scheme for consolidating the whole dock business of the port of London, by cutting a new channel for the Thames across the Isle of Dogs. On the establishment in 1893 of the London Reform Union, he was appointed its Secretary, a post which he relinquished in 1894 on being elected Secretary of the Independent Labour Party.

[1] Article in *Justice*, September 3, 1887.

[2] Mr. John Burns, in many respects the most striking personality in the contemporary Labour Movement, was born at Battersea in 1859, and was apprenticed to a local engineering firm. Already during his apprenticeship he made his voice heard in public, in 1877 being actually arrested for persistently speaking on Clapham Common, and in 1878 braving the "Jingo" mob at a Hyde Park demonstration. As soon as he was out of his time (1879) he joined the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, and became an advocate of shorter hours of labour. An engagement as engineer on the Niger, West Africa, during 1880–1, gave him leisure to read, which he utilised by mastering Adam Smith and J. S. Mill. Returning to London, he worked side by side with Victor Delahaye, an ex-Communard, who was afterwards one of the French representatives at the Berlin Labour Conference, 1891, and with whom he had many talks on the advancement of labour. In 1883 he joined the Social Democratic Federation, and at once became its leading working-class member, championing its cause, for instance, in an impressive speech at the Industrial Remuneration Conference in 1885. In the same year he

Here we see the beginning of that agitation against the combination of friendly benefits with trade protection aims which subsequently became, for a short time, one of the characteristics of the "New Unionism." But if the trade friendly society withered up during these years into a mere benefit club, the purely trade society showed no greater vitality. The great depression of 1878–9 had swept out of existence hundreds of little local Unions which lacked the cohesion given by the friendly society side. The Lancashire and Midland Miners' organisations, which gave no benefits, had either collapsed altogether, or had dissolved into isolated pit clubs, incapable of combined action. The Lancashire Cotton Operatives, the Northumberland and Durham Miners, and a few other essentially trade societies, held together only by surrendering to the employers one concession after another. With capitalists ready at any moment to suspend a profitless business, Collective Bargaining proved as powerless to avert reductions as the individual contract. In face of a

was elected by his district of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers as its representative at the quinquennial delegate meeting of the Society, where he found himself the youngest member. At the General Election of 1885 he stood as Socialist candidate for West Nottingham, receiving 598 votes. For the next two years he became known as the leader of the London "unemployed" agitation. His prosecution for sedition in 1886 (with three other prominent members of the Social Democratic Federation) aroused considerable interest, and on his acquittal, his speech for the defence, *The Man with the Red Flag*, had a large sale in pamphlet form (London, 1886, 16 pp.). At the prohibited demonstration at Trafalgar Square on "Bloody Sunday" (November 13, 1887), in conjunction with Mr. Cunninghame Graham, M.P., he broke through the police line, for which they were both sentenced to six weeks' imprisonment. In January, 1889, he was elected for Battersea to the new London County Council, on which he has ever since been one of the most useful and influential members. His magnificent work in the dock strike and in organising the unskilled labourers is described in the text. At the General Election of 1892 he was chosen, by a large majority, M.P. for Battersea, and at the Trade Union Congress in 1893 he received the largest number of votes for the Parliamentary Committee, of which he accordingly became chairman.

long-continued depression of trade, marked by frequent oscillations in particular industries, both types of Trade Unionism, it seemed, had been tried and found wanting.

These were the circumstances under which the disillusioned working-class politician or Trade Unionist was reached by the lectures and writings of the Socialists, who offered him not only a sympathetic explanation of the ills from which he suffered, but also a comprehensive scheme of social reform, extending from an Eight Hours Bill to the Nationalisation of the Means of Production. In a purely historical essay it is unnecessary for us to discuss the validity of the optimistic confidence with which the Socialists of these years declared that under a system of collective ownership the workers would not only be ensured at all times a competent livelihood, but would themselves control the administration of the surplus wealth of the nation. But in tracing the causes of the New Unionism of 1889–90, and the transformation of the Trade Union Movement from an Individualist to a Collectivist influence in the political world, we venture to ascribe a large share to the superior attractiveness of this buoyant faith over anything offered by the almost cynical fatalism of the old school.

The Socialist agitation benefited between 1886 and 1889 by a series of undesigned advertisements. Meetings of "the unemployed" in February, 1886, led to unexpected riots, which threw all London into a panic, and were followed by a Government prosecution for sedition. Messrs. Hyndman, Burns, Champion, and Williams, as the leaders of the Social Democratic Federation, were indicted at the Old Bailey, and their trial, ending in an acquittal, attracted the attention of the whole country to their doctrines. The "Unemployed" gatherings went on with ever-increasing noise until November, 1887, when the Chief Commissioner of Police issued a proclamation prohibiting meetings in Trafalgar Square, which had for a whole generation served as the forum of the London agitator. This "attack on free speech" by a Conserva-

tive Government, coming after several minor attempts to suppress open-air meetings by its Liberal predecessor, rallied the forces of London artisan Radicalism to those of the Socialists. A gigantic demonstration on Sunday, November 13, 1887, was held in defiance of the police, only to be repulsed from Trafalgar Square by a free use of the police bludgeon and the calling out of both cavalry and infantry. Messrs. John Burns and Cunninghame Graham, M.P., were imprisoned for their share in this transaction. A similar agitation on a smaller scale was going on in the provinces. On Tyneside and in the Midlands numerous emissaries of the Social-Democratic Federation and the Socialist League were spreading the revolt against the helpless apathy into which the Trade Unions had sunk. In every large industrial centre the indefatigable lecturing of branches of Socialist organisations was stirring up a vague but effective unrest in all except the official circle of the Trade Union world.

To the great army of unskilled, or only partially skilled, workmen concentrated in London and other large cities the new crusade came as a gospel of deliverance. The unskilled labourer was getting tired of being referred, as the sole means of bettering his condition, to the "scientific Trade Unionism" alone recognised by the Front Bench. Trade Societies which admitted only workmen earning a high standard rate, which exacted a weekly contribution of not less than a shilling, and which frequently excluded all but regularly apprenticed men, were regarded by the builders' labourer, the gas stoker, or the docker, as aristocratic corporations with which he had as little in common as with the House of Lords. "The great bulk of our labourers," writes John Burns, "are ignored by the skilled workers. It is this selfish, snobbish desertion by the higher grades of the lower, that makes success in many disputes impossible. Ostracised by their fellows, a spirit of revenge alone often prompts men to oppose or remain indifferent to Unionism, when if the Unions were wiser and more conciliatory, support

would have been forthcoming where now jealousy and discontent prevails."[1] Even among the skilled workers, the younger artisans, if they had joined their Unions at all, were discontented with the exclusive and apathetic policy of the older members. Thus we find rising up, in such "aristocratic" Unions as the Amalgamated Society of Engineers and the London Society of Compositors, a "New Unionist" party of young men, who vigorously objected to the degradation of a Trade Union into a mutual insurance company, who protested against the exclusion of the lowly-paid sections from the organisation of the trade, and who advocated the use of the political influence of the Society in the interests of Social-Democracy. By 1888 the Socialists had not only secured the allegiance of large sections of the unskilled labourers in London and some other towns, but had obtained an important body of recruits in the great "Amalgamated" societies.

At this pass nothing short of strangulation could have kept the new spirit out of the Trade Union Congress. It is interesting to notice that the first sign among the delegates is to be ascribed to the direct influence of Karl Marx. At the 1878 Congress at Bristol we find Adam Weiler, an old member of the "International," and a personal friend of the great Socialist, reading a paper in which he advocated legislation to limit the hours of labour.[2] At the next Congress Weiler took exception to

[1] Address to Trade Unionists in *Justice*, January 24, 1885.

[2] Weiler was the delegate of the Alliance Cabinetmakers' Society, and came from London. The Congress Report gives the following account of his paper: "After reviewing the position of the working classes under the present system, and comparing it with the state of things eighty years ago, he contended that the best means of bettering their position was to reduce the hours of toil. The result of this would be, first, to give every worker a better chance of employment, and thus lessen that sort of competition which was caused by hunger and want; secondly, it would give them time and opportunity for rest and amusement, and that cultivation of their minds which would enable them to prepare themselves for the time when the present system of production would collapse, and the time of this collapse

the resolution in favour of establishing a Peasant Proprietorship moved on behalf of the Parliamentary Committee. But in that year his amendment in favour of Land Nationalisation did not even find a seconder. Three years later the effect of Mr. George's propaganda becomes visible. In 1882, when the land question was again raised, the two ideals were sharply contrasted, and in spite of protests against "communistic principles," a rider declaring for nationalisation was adopted by 71 votes to 31. The Parliamentary Committee made no change in their attitude on the question, contending that the vote had been taken in the absence of many delegates, and that it did not represent the opinion of the Congress as a whole. This contention was to some extent borne out by the votes of the next five Congresses, at all of which amendments in favour of the principles of nationalisation were rejected, though by decreasing majorities. At length, in 1887, at the Swansea Congress, the tide turned, and a vague amendment in favour of Land Nationalisation was accepted. At the Bradford Congress in 1888 the very idea of Peasant Proprietorship had disappeared. The representatives of the agricultural labourers now asked only for individual occupation of publicly owned allotments. Ultimately the Congress adopted by 66 votes to 5 a distinct declaration in favour of Land Nationalisation, coupled with an instruction to the Parliamentary Committee to bring the proposal before the House of Commons.

Meanwhile Weiler had made another and more successful attempt to enlist the aid of the Congress in the legal regulation of the hours of labour. At the 1883 Congress he moved a resolution which instructed the Parliamentary Committee to obtain the legal limitation to eight hours of the maximum day of all workers in the employment of public authorities, or companies exercising Parliamentary

was not so distant as some supposed." The paper was received with much applause, and Mr. Weiler received the thanks of Congress. No resolution was passed.

powers. This was seconded by Mr. Edward Harford, the General Secretary of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, and carried, in a thin meeting, by 33 to 8. The Parliamentary Committee, however, took no more notice of this decision than of that relating to Land Nationalisation. In 1885 the movement had so far gained weight that the Parliamentary Committee thought it expedient to temporise by promoting an investigation into the amount of overtime worked in Government departments, with the result of demonstrating how completely the practice of systematic overtime had neutralised the Nine Hours victory.[1] At the 1887 Congress at Swansea the Parliamentary Committee were instructed to take a vote of the Trade Union world upon the whole question, a vote which revealed the unexpected fact that Applegarth's own Union, the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners, had been converted to an Eight Hours Bill.[2] A second plebiscite, taken at the instance of the following year's Congress, showed that such old Unions as the Compositors, the Ironfounders, and the Railway Servants were swinging round.[3]

In the meantime the growing divergence of policy among the coalminers, which we foreshadowed in the last chapter, had brought a powerful contingent of organised workmen to the support of the new party. We

[1] The Return moved for by Mr. George Howell regarding the Woolwich and Enfield engineering works showed that, during 1884 and 1885, more than half the artisans worked overtime, the average per week for each man varying from 9·4 hours in some shops to 17·8 in others.

[2] 11,966 of its members voted for an Eight Hours Day, and of these 9,209 declared in favour of the enforcement of the Eight Hours limit by law. The total votes given for an Eight Hours Law was 17,267 ; against it, 3,819.

[3] The votes in favour of an Eight Hours Day were 39,656 ; against it, 67,390, of which 56,541 were cast on behalf of the Cotton-spinners and Weavers. In favour of an Eight Hours Law, 28,511 ; against it, 12,283. The votes of the different trades, and a summary of the Congress proceedings on this subject, are given in *The Eight Hours Day*, by Sidney Webb and Harold Cox (London, 1891).

have already described the conversion of the leaders of the Northumberland and Durham miners to the principle of the Sliding Scale, involving, as it did, the dependence of the worker's standard of comfort upon the market price of his product. On another point, too, the two northern counties had broken away from the traditional policy of the Miners' organisations. Already in 1863 we noted that Crawford, one of the ablest of their leaders, was vigorously objecting, at the Leeds Conference, to an Eight Hours Bill for boys, on the ground that in Northumberland and Durham, where the hewers worked in two shifts, such a restriction would interfere with the men's convenience. This resistance to a particular interference with the exceptional circumstances of the local industry gradually developed into a general objection to legal regulation of the hours of adult men. We find, therefore, the Northumberland and Durham miners from 1875 onwards ranging themselves more and more with the leaders of the iron and building trades, who, as we have seen, had become largely converted to the economic conceptions then current among the middle class. The fact that the Northumberland and Durham Associations, almost alone among Miners' Unions, had successfully weathered the bad times of 1877–9, and the constant presence of one or other of their leaders on the Parliamentary Committee, caused these opinions to be accepted as those of the whole industry.

But the miners elsewhere did not long rest content with the new policy of Durham and Northumberland. In December, 1881, the amalgamated South and West Yorkshire Miners' Associations formally terminated the then existing Sliding Scale, and passed a resolution in favour of the policy of restricting the output. During the following years the Yorkshire employers several times proposed the re-establishment of a scale, but the men insisted on its being accompanied by an agreement for a minimum below which wages should in no event fall—a condition to which the coalowners uniformly refused their

assent. The lead given by the Yorkshire Miners was quickly followed by other districts, notably by Lancashire. In this county Trade Unionism among the miners had, as we have seen, gone to pieces in the bad years. Reorganisation in local Unions came in 1881; and a Lancashire Miners' Federation was successfully established in the following year. At their Conference of 1883 the delegates of the Lancashire miners resolved, "That the time has come when the working miners shall regulate the production of coal; that no collier or other underground worker shall work more than five days or shifts per week; and that the hours from bank to bank be eight per shift." Finding it impossible to secure their object by strikes, the Lancashire men turned to that policy of legislative regulation which had marked the proceedings of the Conference of 1863.

With the improvement in trade which began in 1885, the membership and influence of the Lancashire and Yorkshire organisations rapidly increased, and new federations were started throughout the Midlands. The Scotch miners, too, had in 1886–7 a short outburst of organisation, when a national federation was formed with a membership of 23,000. All these Associations adopted the policy of regulating the output, and the Scotch miners, in particular, conducted, in 1887, a vigorous agitation in support of the clause limiting the day's work to eight hours, which two Scottish members endeavoured to insert in the Mines Regulation Act of 1887.[1] But the Executive of the National Union had, since Macdonald's death in 1881, fallen entirely into the hands of the Northumberland and Durham leaders. Under their influence it maintained its adherence to the principle of the Sliding Scale and its hostility to the Eight Hours Bill, thereby

[1] The clause was moved by Mr. S. Williamson, Liberal member for Kilmarnock, and seconded by Mr. J. H. C. Hozier, Conservative member for South Lanarkshire. It received no support from the "Labour Members," and was rejected by 159 to 104. See the *Eight Hours Day*, by Webb and Cox (London, 1891), p. 23.

alienating, not only the new federations, but also the old-established and powerful Yorkshire Union. From 1885 to 1888 the battle between the contending doctrines raged at every miners' conference.[1] During the latter year the combatants withdrew to separate camps. In September, 1888, a conference of the representatives of non-sliding scale districts was called together in Manchester, when arrangements were made for the establishment of a new federation, into which no district governed by a sliding scale was to be allowed to enter. From this time forth the old National Union on the one hand, and the new Miners' Federation on the other, became rivals for the allegiance of the various district associations, and somewhat unsympathetic critics of each other's policy and actions. The issue was not long doubtful. The National Union gradually shrank up to Northumberland and Durham, whilst the Miners' Federation, with its aggressive policy and its semi-Socialistic principles of a minimum wage and a legal day, grew apace. From 36,000 members in 1888, it rose to 96,000 in 1889, 147,000 in 1891, and over 200,000 in 1893, overshadowing in its growth all existing Trade Union organisations. The Socialist advocates of the legal limitation of the hours of labour accordingly enjoyed from 1888 onward, both in the Trade Union Congress and at the polling-booths, the support of a rapidly growing contingent of organised miners, whose solid adhesion has done more than anything else to promote the general movement in favour of an Eight Hours Bill.

[1] The "National Conferences" of the miners are a feature peculiar to the industry. Besides the periodical gatherings of the separate federations, the miners, since 1863, have had frequent conferences of delegates from all the organised districts in the kingdom. These conferences were, until 1889, held under the auspices of the National Union; at present they are summoned by the Miners' Federation. The meetings, from which reporters are now excluded, are consultative only, and their decisions do not bind the separate organisations. See *Die Ordnung des Arbeitsverhältnisses in den Kohlengruben von Northumberland und Durham*, by Dr. Emil Auerbach (Leipzig, 1890, 268 pp.).

It is easy at this distance to recognise, in the altered tone of the rank and file of Congress delegates, a reflection of the wider change of opinion outside. But to the Trade Union Front Bench, as, in fact, to most of the politicians of the time, it was incredible that the new ideas should gain any real footing among the skilled artisans. The Parliamentary Committee regarded the innovations with much the same feeling as that with which they had met the proposals of a little gang which had, in 1882, vainly attempted to foist the principles of fiscal protection upon the Congress.[1] When Congress insisted on passing a resolution with which the Parliamentary Committee found themselves in disagreement, this expression of opinion was silently ignored as being nothing more than the fad of particular delegates. It was in vain that the Congress of 1888, after ten years' deliberation, definitely decided in favour of the principles of Land

[1] The "Fair Trade" attack had arisen in the following manner. At the Bristol Congress in 1878, certain delegates, who were strongly suspected of being the paid agents of the organisation then agitating for the abolition of the foreign bounties on sugar, attempted to force this question upon the Congress, and made a serious disturbance. These delegates afterwards became the paid representatives of the "Fair Trade League," an association avowedly composed of landlords and capitalists with the object of securing a re-imposition of import duties. The Front Bench steadfastly refused to allow the Congress to be used for promotion of this object, and were exposed in return to what the Congress in 1882 declared to be "a cowardly, false, and slanderous attack, . . . an attempt at moral assassination." Instead of fighting the question of Free Trade *versus* Protection, the emissaries of the Fair Trade League developed an elaborate system of personal defamation, directed against Messrs. Broadhurst, Howell, Shipton, and other leaders. For instance, Mr. Broadhurst's administration of the Gas Stokers' Relief Fund in 1872 was made the pretext for vague insinuations of malversation which were scattered broadcast through the Trade Union world. At the Congress of 1881 the "Fair Trade" delegates were expelled, on it being proved that their expenses were not paid by the Trade Union organisations which they nominally represented. A renewed attack on the Congress of 1882 ended in the triumphant victory of the Parliamentary Committee, the complete exoneration of Mr. Broadhurst and his colleagues, and the final discomfiture of the "Fair Trade" delegates.

Nationalisation instead of Peasant Proprietorship. The Parliamentary Committee took no notice of the decision. The Eight Hours question could not be treated quite so cavalierly. Direct resolutions in favour of legislative action were therefore staved off by proposals for inquiry. When a vote of the Trade Union world was decided upon, the Parliamentary Committee, in conjunction with many of the General Secretaries, were able practically to baulk the investigation. The voting paper was loaded with warnings and arguments against legislative action. No attempt was made to ensure a genuine vote of the rank and file. In some cases the Executive Committees were allowed to take upon themselves the responsibility of declaring the opinions held by the members of their societies, the total membership of which was then reckoned in the voting. In other instances the Executives were permitted without remonstrance simply to burke the question. No honest attempt, in fact, was made to carry out the repeated directions of Congress; and the inquiry failed to elicit any trustworthy census of the opinion of the Trade Union world.

An equal lack of sympathy was shown in connection with the growing feeling of the Congress in favour of the participation of English Trade Unionists in International Congresses. At the express command of Congress, the Parliamentary Committee sent delegates to the International gatherings of 1883 and 1886. But though these instructions were complied with, the Parliamentary Committee made it clear, in their annual reports, that far from favouring International action, "the position they assumed was that they were so well organised, so far ahead of foreign workmen, that little could be done until these were more on a level" with the skilled workers of England.[1] The Congress of 1886 nevertheless instructed the Parliamentary Committee to summon an International Conference in London in the following year. Instead of

[1] Report to Congress of 1884. This is another instance of the abandonment of the more generous views of Applegarth and Odger.

complying with this instruction, the Committee published, in May, 1887, a lengthy pamphlet explaining that, owing to the indisposition of foreign workmen to make any pecuniary sacrifices for their Trade Unions, and the consequent lack of any stable working-class organisations, they had decided to refer the whole question again to the forthcoming Trade Union Congress. When the Congress met at Swansea in September, 1887, it soon became evident that the Parliamentary Committee, on this question as on others, was quite out of touch with its constituents. In spite of the influence of the Front Bench, a resolution in favour of an International Congress was adopted; and the Committee succeeded only in inducing Congress to impose restrictions which were intended to exclude the delegates of the German Social-Democratic party. The International Congress was held in London in November, 1888. Notwithstanding every precaution, a majority of the representatives proved to be of Socialist views, Mrs. Besant, Messrs. John Burns, Tom Mann, and Keir Hardie appearing among the English delegates. The stiff and unsympathetic attitude of the Parliamentary Committee led to heated and, at times, unseemly controversies; and the resolutions passed were treated by the Committee as of no account whatsoever.

The net result of these proceedings was the loss by the Parliamentary Committee of all intellectual leadership of the Trade Union world. They failed either to resist the new ideas, or to guide them into practicable channels. The official Trade Union programme from 1885 to 1889 becomes steadily more colourless, in striking contrast with the rapid march of politics in the country, which was sweeping the Liberal party forward year by year until in 1891 it adopted the so-called "Newcastle Programme." This programme formulated the national side of that semi-collectivist policy which under the name of Progressivism had superseded Liberalism in the London County Council. All that the Parliamentary Committee did was to abandon, one by one, the proposals for the democratisa-

tion of the civil and judicial administration which the Front Bench had so much at heart, without replacing them by the more robust resolutions which the Congress in these years was passing. The Land Question, on which a vigorous advocacy of the creation of small freeholders had been formerly maintained, dwindled to a meaningless demand for undefined reform of the land laws, and finally disappeared altogether on the adoption by the Congress of the principle of nationalisation. The maintenance of the Nine Hours Day, and the further reduction of the hours of labour by means of voluntary combination (a frequent item in the official agenda from 1875 to 1879) gradually dropped out altogether as the new demand for legal regulation gathered strength. In short, the Parliamentary Committee had perforce to give up those items in their programme which were contrary to the new ideas of Congress, whilst they silently abstained from incorporating the new resolutions with which they were personally not in agreement.

It would, however, be unfair to assume that the stock of official Trade Unionism was, during these years, absolutely barren of new developments. To Mr. C. J. Drummond,[1] then Secretary to the London Society of Compositors, and a friend of the Parliamentary Committee, belongs the credit of having taken the first step towards the enforcement, through the Government, of a standard minimum wage. On the revision of the Government printing contract in 1884, Mr. Drummond secured the support of the Parliamentary Committee in an attempt to induce the Stationery Office to adopt, as the basis for the contract, the Trade Union rates of the London compositors. This attempt was, in the main, successful; but the new contract was nevertheless given to a "closed" house, in which no member of the Union could work. The compositors did not let the matter rest. When the

[1] Mr. Drummond, who resigned his secretaryship in 1892, was in the following year appointed to the staff of the Labour Department of the Board of Trade.

President of the Local Government Board (Mr. J. Chamberlain) issued a circular in January, 1886, as to the effects of the depression in trade, Mr. Drummond replied by explicitly demanding the Government's recognition of the Standard Wage in all their dealings. The idea spread with great rapidity. A general demand was started that public authorities should present a good example as employers of labour by themselves paying Trade Union rates, and insisting on their contractors doing the same. Candidates for Parliament at the General Election of 1886 found themselves, at the instance of the London Society of Compositors,[1] for the first time "heckled" as to their willingness to insist on "Fair Wages"; and it began slowly to dawn upon election agents that it might be prejudicial for their election literature to bear the imprint of "rat houses." In October, 1886, the action of the London School Board in giving its printing contract to an "unfair" house was bitterly resented by the London compositors, who induced the London Trades Council to go on a vain deputation of protest. When, in November, 1888, the London School Board election came round, Mr. A. G. Cook, a member of the London Society of Compositors, secured election for Finsbury, avowedly as a champion of Trade Union wages; and two members of the Fabian Society, Mrs. Annie Besant and the Rev. Stewart Headlam, won seats as Socialists. By their eloquence and tactical skill these members induced the Board, early in 1889, to declare that it would henceforth insist on the payment of "Fair Wages" by all its contractors, a policy in which the Board was promptly followed by the newly-established London County Council.[2] This

[1] See its Circular of June, 1886.

[2] Some isolated protests against the employment of non-Unionists are of earlier date. Thus, the minutes of the Birmingham Trades Council show that, on July 3, 1880, at the instance of a painters' delegate, it passed a resolution protesting against the employment of "non-Union and incompetent men" by the local hospital. And in the same month the Wolverhampton Trades Council had successfully protested against the employment of non-Unionist printers upon a new Liberal newspaper about to be established.

new departure by the leading public bodies in the Metropolis did much to bring about a common understanding between the official Trade Unionists and the new movement. It is needless to describe in this place how, since that date, the principle of "Fair Wages" has developed. A hundred and fifty local authorities have now (1894) adopted some kind of "Fair Wages" resolution. In 1890, and more explicitly still in 1893, successive Governments have found it necessary to repudiate the old principle of buying in the cheapest market, in favour of the now widespread feeling that public authorities as large employers of labour, instead of ignoring the condition of their employees, should use their influence to maintain the Standard Rate of Wages and Standard Hours of Labour recognised and in practice obtained by the Trade Unions concerned.

Though the Front Bench as a whole maintained during these years its policy of contemptuous inactivity, there were, as we have seen, some signs of the permeation of the new ideas. It was under these circumstances a grave misfortune that the inevitable criticism on the Parliamentary Committee began by a scurrilous attack upon the personal character and conduct of its leaders.[1] During the years 1887–9 the conscientious adhesion to the Liberal party of most of the Parliamentary Committee was made the occasion for gross charges of personal corruption. The General Secretaries of the great Unions, men who had for a lifetime diligently served their constituents, found their influence undermined, their character attacked, and themselves denounced, by the circulation all over the country of insidious accusations of treachery to the working classes. These charges found a too ready acceptance among, and were repeated by,

[1] The chief medium for the attack was the *Labour Elector*, a penny weekly journal published, from September, 1888, to April, 1890, by Mr. H. H. Champion, an ex-officer of the Royal Artillery, who had at one time been a leading member of the Social Democratic Federation, from which he was excluded on a difference of policy.

those young and impatient recruits of the new movement who knew nothing of the history and services of the men they were attacking. In the year 1889 the friction reached its climax. During the summer the attacks upon the personal character of the Front Bench were redoubled. As the date of the Trade Union Congress approached, it became known that a determined attempt would be made by the Socialist delegates to oust the Parliamentary Committee from office. The Congress met at Dundee, and plunged straight into an angry conflict in which the Socialists were completely routed. The regular attenders of the Congress had, as we have seen, been gradually absorbing many of the new ideas, and were not altogether satisfied with the way their resolutions had been ignored by the Parliamentary Committee. But all discontent or criticism was swept away by the anger which the character of the attack had excited. A great majority of the delegates came expressly pledged to support Mr. Broadhurst and his colleagues, and when the division was taken only 11 out of a meeting of 188 delegates were found to vote against him. The Cotton Operatives who had at all times supported factory legislation, the Miners who were demanding an Eight Hours Bill, the Londoners who came from the centre of the Socialist agitation—all rallied to defend the Parliamentary Committee. The little knot of assailants were thoroughly discredited; and the triumph of the "old gang" was complete.

The victory of the Parliamentary Committee was hailed with satisfaction by all who were alarmed at the progress of the new ideas. For a moment it looked as if the organised Trade Unions of skilled workers had definitely separated themselves from the new labour movement growing up around them. Such a separation would, in our opinion, have been an almost irreparable disaster. The Trade Union Congress could claim to represent less than ten per cent. of the wage-earners of the country. Many of the old societies were already shrinking up into insignificant minorities of superior workmen, intent

mainly on securing their sick and superannuation benefits. Any definite exclusion of wider ideals might easily have reduced the whole Trade Union organisation to nothing more than a somewhat stagnant department of the Friendly Society movement. This danger was averted by a series of dramatic events which brought the new movement once more inside the Trade Union ranks. At the moment that Mr. Broadhurst was triumphing over his enemies at Dundee, the London dock-labourers were marching to that brilliant victory over their employers which changed the whole face of the Trade Union world.

The great dock strike of 1889 was the culmination of an attempt to organise the unskilled workers which had begun in London two or three years before. The privations suffered by the unemployed labourers during the years of depression of trade, and the new spirit of hopefulness due to the Socialist propaganda, had led to efforts being made to bring the vast hordes of unskilled workmen in the Metropolis into some kind of organisation. At first this movement made very little progress. In July, 1888, however, the harsh treatment suffered by the women employed in making lucifer matches roused the burning indignation of Mrs. Besant, then editing *The Link*, a little weekly newspaper which had arisen out of the struggle for Trafalgar Square. A fiery leading article had the unexpected result of causing the match-girls to revolt; and 672 of them came out on strike. Without funds, without organisation, the struggle seemed hopeless. But by the indefatigable energy of Mrs. Besant and Mr. Herbert Burrows public opinion was aroused in a manner never before witnessed; £400 was subscribed by hundreds of sympathisers in all classes; and after a fortnight's obstinacy the employers were compelled, by sheer pressure of public feeling, to make some concessions to their workers.

The match-girls' victory turned a new leaf in Trade Union annals. Hitherto success had been in almost

exact proportion to the worker's strength. It was a new experience for the weak to succeed because of their very weakness, by means of the intervention of the public. The lesson was not lost on other classes of workers. The London gas-stokers were being organised by Messrs. Burns, Mann, and Tillett, aided by Mr. William Thorne, himself a gas-worker and a man of sterling integrity and capacity. The Gas-workers and General Labourers' Union, established in May, 1889, quickly enrolled many thousands of members, who in the first days of August simultaneously demanded a reduction of their hours of labour from twelve to eight per day. After an interval of acute suspense, during which the directors of the three great London gas companies measured their forces, peaceful counsels prevailed, and the Eight Hours Day, to the general surprise of the men no less than that of the public, was conceded without a struggle, and was even accompanied by a slight increase of the week's wages.[1]

The success of such unorganised and unskilled workers as the Match-makers and the Gas-stokers led to renewed efforts to bring the great army of Dock-labourers into the ranks of Trade Unionism. For two years past the prominent London Socialists had journeyed to the dock gates in the early hours of the morning to preach organised revolt to the crowds of casuals struggling for work. Meanwhile Mr. Benjamin Tillett, then working as a labourer in the tea warehouses, was spending his strength in the apparently hopeless task of constituting the Tea-workers and General Labourers' Union. The membership of this society fluctuated between 300 and 2,500 members; it had practically no funds; and its very existence seemed precarious. Suddenly the organisation

[1] The men employed by two of the gas companies in London, and by most of those engaged by provincial municipalities, have retained this boon. But in December, 1889, the South Metropolitan Gas Company insisted, after a serious strike, on a return to the twelve hours shift. A scheme of profit sharing was used to break up their men's Union, and induce them to accept individual engagements inconsistent with Collective Bargaining.

received a new impulse. An insignificant dispute on the 12th of August, 1889, as to the amount of "plus" (or bonus earned over and above the fivepence per hour) on a certain cargo, brought on an impulsive strike of the labourers at the South-West India Dock. The men demanded sixpence an hour, the abolition of sub-contract and piecework, extra pay for overtime, and a minimum engagement of four hours. Mr. Tillett called to his aid his friends Tom Mann and John Burns, and appealed to the whole body of dock labourers to take up the fight. The strike spread rapidly to all the docks north of the Thames. Within three days ten thousand labourers had, with one accord, left the precarious and ill-paid work to get which they had, morning after morning, fought at the dock gates. The two powerful Unions of Stevedores (the better-paid, trained workmen who load ships for export) cast in their lot with the dockers, and in the course of the next week practically all the riverside labour had joined the strike. Under the magnetic influence and superb generalship of Mr. John Burns, which have made him famous as a labour leader on both sides of the globe, the traffic of the world's greatest port was, for over four weeks, completely paralysed. An electric spark of sympathy with the poor dockers fired the enthusiasm of all classes of the community. Public disapproval hindered the dock companies from obtaining, even for their unskilled labour, sufficient blacklegs to take the strikers' place. A public subscription of £48,736 allowed Mr. Burns to organise an elaborate system of strike-pay, which not only maintained the honest docker, but also bribed every East End loafer to withhold his labour; and finally the concentrated pressure of editors, clergymen, shareholders, shipowners, and merchants enabled Cardinal Manning and Mr. Sydney Buxton, M.P., as self-appointed mediators, to compel the Dock Directors to concede practically the whole of the men's demands, a delay of six weeks being granted to allow the new arrangements to be made. As in the case of the match-girls in the previous year, the

most remarkable feature of the dockers' strike was the almost universal sympathy with the workers' demands. A practical manifestation of that sympathy was given by the workmen of Australia. The Australian newspapers published telegraphic accounts of the conflict, with descriptions of the dockers' wrongs, which produced an unparalleled and unexpected result. Public subscriptions in aid of the London dockers were opened in all the principal towns on the Australian continent; and money poured in from all sides. Over £30,000 was remitted to London by telegraph—an absolutely unique contribution towards the strike subsidy which went far to win the victory ultimately achieved.[1]

The immediate result of the dockers' success was the formation of a large number of Trade Unions among the unskilled labourers. Branches of the Dock, Wharf, and Riverside Labourers' Union (into which Mr Tillett's little society was now transformed) were established at all the principal ports. A rival society of dockers, established at Liverpool, enrolled thousands of members at Glasgow and Belfast. The unskilled labourers in Newcastle joined the Tyneside and National Labour Union, which soon extended to all the neighbouring towns. The Gas-workers' Union enrolled tens of thousands of labourers of all kinds in the provincial cities. The General Railway Workers' Union, originally established in 1889 as a rival to the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, took in great numbers of general labourers. The National Amalgamated Sailors and Firemen's Union,[2]

[1] This strike had the good fortune to find contemporary historians who were themselves concerned in all the phases of the struggle. *The Story of the Dockers' Strike*, by Messrs. H. Llewellyn Smith and Vaughan Nash (London, 1890, 190 pp.), gives not only a detailed chronicle of the highly dramatic proceedings, but also a useful description of the organisation of the London docks.

[2] Short-lived and turbulent combinations among seamen have existed at various periods for the past hundred years, notably between 1810 and 1825, on the north-east coast, where many sailors' benefit clubs were also established. In 1851, again, a widespread national organisation of seamen is said to have existed, having 25

established in 1887, expanded during 1889 to a membership of 65,000. Within a year after the dockers' victory probably over 200,000 workers had been added to the Trade Union ranks, recruited from sections of the labour world formerly abandoned as incapable of organisation. All these societies were marked by low contributions and comprehensive membership. They were, at the outset, essentially if not exclusively devoted to trade protection, and were largely political in their aims. Their characteristic spirit is aptly expressed by the resolution of the Congress of the General Railway Workers' Union on the 19th of November, 1890, "That the Union shall remain a fighting one, and shall not be encumbered with any sick or accident fund." "We have at present," reports the General Secretary of the National Union of Gas-workers and General Labourers in November, 1889, "one of the strongest labour Unions in England. It is true we have only one benefit attached, and that is strike pay. I do not believe in having sick pay, out-of-work pay, and a number of other pays. . . . The whole aim and intention of this Union is to reduce the hours of labour and reduce Sunday work." [1]

A wave of Trade Unionism, comparable in extent with those of 1833–4 and 1873–4, was now spreading into every corner of British industry. Already in 1888 the revival of trade has led to a marked increase in Trade Union membership. This normal growth now received a

branches between Peterhead and London, and numbering 30,000 members. This appears to have been a loose federation of practically autonomous port Unions, which for some years kept up a vigorous agitation against obnoxious clauses in the Merchant Shipping Acts of 1851–4, and fought the sailors' grievances in the law-courts. In 1879 the existing North of England's Sailors and Seagoing Firemen's Friendly Association was established, but failed to maintain itself outside Sunderland. In 1887 its most vigorous member, Mr. J. Havelock Wilson, convinced that nothing but a national organisation would be effective, started the National Amalgamated Sailors and Firemen's Union, which his able and pertinacious "lobbying" has made an effective Parliamentary force.

[1] Address to members in First Half-yearly Report (London, 1889).

great impulse from the sensational events of the Dock strike. Even the oldest and most aristocratic Unions were affected by the revivalist fervour of the new leaders. The eleven principal societies in the shipbuilding and metal trades, which had been, since 1885, on the decline, increased from 115,000 at the end of 1888 to 130,000 in 1889, 145,000 in 1890, and 155,000 in 1891. The ten largest Unions in the building trades, which between 1885 and 1888 had likewise declined in numbers, rose from 57,000 in 1888 to 63,000 in 1889, 80,000 in 1890, and 94,000 in 1891. In certain individual societies the increase in membership during these years was unparalleled in their history. We have already referred to the rapid rise between 1888 and 1891 of that modern Colossus of Unions, the Miners' Federation. The Operative Society of Bricklayers, established in 1848, grew from a fairly stationary 7,000 in 1888, to over 17,000 in 1891. The National Society of Boot and Shoe Operatives, established in 1874, went from 11,000 in 1888 to 30,000 in 1891. And, to turn to quite a different industry, the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, a trade friendly society of the old type, established in 1872, rose from 12,000 in 1888 to 30,000 in 1891. Nor was the expansion confined to a mere increase in membership. New Trades Councils sprang up in all directions, whilst those already existing were rejoined by the trades which had left them. Federations of the Unions in kindred trades were set on foot, and competing societies in the same trade sank their rivalry in the formation of local joint committees.

The victory of the London Dockers and the impetus it gave to Trade Unionism throughout the country at last opened the eyes of the Trade Union world to the significance of the new movement. It was no longer possible for the Parliamentary Committee to denounce the Socialists as a set of outside intriguers, when Messrs. Burns and Mann, now become the representative Socialists, stood at the head of a body of 200,000 hitherto unorga-

nised workmen. The general secretaries of the older Unions, forming a compact official party behind the Front Bench, were veering around towards the advanced party. Their constituencies were becoming permeated with Socialism. In many instances the older members now supported the new faith. In other cases they found themselves submerged by the large accessions to their membership, which, as we have already seen, resulted from the general expansion. The process of conversion was facilitated by the genuine admiration felt by the whole Trade Union world for the great organising power and generalship shown by the leaders of the new movement, and by the cessation of the personal abuse and recrimination which had hitherto marred the controversy. At the Dundee Congress of 1889, as we have seen, Mr. Broadhurst, and his colleagues on the Parliamentary Committee, had triumphed all along the line. Within a year the situation had entirely changed. The Stonemasons, Mr. Broadhurst's own society, had decided, by a vote of the members, to support an Eight Hours Bill, and Mr. Broadhurst, under these circumstances, had perforce to refuse to act as their representative. The Executive Council of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers chose Messrs. Burns and Mann as two out of their five delegates, impressing upon them all a recommendation to vote for the legal limitation of the hours of labour. Both the old-established societies of Carpenters gave a similar mandate. The Miners' Federation this time led the attack on the old Front Bench, and the resolution in favour of a general Eight Hours Bill was carried, after a heated debate, by 193 to 155. Mr. Broadhurst resigned his position as Secretary of the Parliamentary Committee on the ground of ill-health.[1] Mr. George Shipton, the

[1] Fortunately the Trade Union world has not been permanently deprived of Mr. Broadhurst's services. He has reconsidered his position on the legal limitation of the hours of labour, and is now (1894) one of the most advanced members of the Parliamentary Committee, to which he was elected second only to Mr. John Burns at the Belfast Congress of 1893

secretary of the London Trades Council, publicly declared his conversion to the legal regulation of the hours of labour. The Liverpool Congress was as decisive a victory for the Socialists as that of Dundee had been for the Parliamentary Committee. The delegates passed in all sixty resolutions. "Out of these sixty resolutions," said John Burns, "forty-five were nothing more or less than direct appeals to the State and Municipalities of this country to do for the workman what Trade Unionism, 'Old' and 'New,' has proved itself incapable of doing. Forty-five out of the sixty resolutions were asking for State or Municipal interference on behalf of the weak against the strong. 'Old' Trade Unionists, from Lancashire, Northumberland, and Birmingham, asked for as many of these resolutions as the delegates from London; but it is a remarkable and significant fact that 19 out of 20 delegates were in favour of the 'New' Trades Union ideas of State interferences in all things except reduction of hours, and even on this we secured a majority that certainly entitles us Socialists to be jubilant at our success."[1]

But whilst the new faith was being adopted by the rank and file of Trade Unionists the character of the Socialist propaganda had been undergoing an equal transformation. The foremost representative of the Collectivist views had hitherto been the Social-Democratic Federation, of which Messrs. Burns and Mann were active members. Under the dominant influence of Mr. H. M. Hyndman, this association adopted the economic basis and political organisation of State Socialism. Yet we find, along with these modern views, a distinct recrudescence of the characteristic projects of the revolutionary Owenism of 1833–4. The student of the volumes of *Justice* between 1884 and 1889 will be struck by the unconscious resemblance of many of the ideas and much of the phraseology of its contributors, to those of the *Poor Man's*

[1] *Speech delivered by John Burns on the Liverpool Congress, Sept.* 21, 1890 (London, 1890, 32 pp.).

Guardian and the *Pioneer* of 1834. We do not here allude to the revival, in 1885, of the old demand for an Eight Hours Bill, a measure regarded on both occasions as a "mere palliative." Nor need we refer to the constant assumption, made alike by Robert Owen and the Social-Democratic lecturers, that the acceptance of the Labour-value theory would enable the difficulty of the "unemployed" to be solved by organising the mutual exchange of their unmarketable products. But both in *Justice* and the *Pioneer* we see the same disbelief in separate action by particular Trade Unions, in contrast to an organisation including "every trade, skilled and unskilled, of every nationality under the sun." [1] "The real emancipation of labour," says the official manifesto of the Social-Democratic Federation to the Trade Unions of Great Britain in September, 1884, "can only be effected by the solemn banding together of millions of human beings in a federation as wide as the civilised world." [2] "The day has gone by," we read in 1887, "for the efforts of isolated trades. . . . Nothing is to be gained for the workers as a class without the complete organisation of labourers of all grades, skilled and unskilled. . . . We appeal therefore earnestly to the skilled artisans of all trades, Unionists and non-Unionists alike, to make common cause with their unskilled brethren, and with us Social-Democrats, so that the workers may themselves take hold of the means of production, and organise a Co-operative Commonwealth for themselves and their children." [3] And if the "scientific Socialists" of 1885 were logically pledged to the administration of industry by the officials of the community at large, none the less do we see constantly cropping up, especially among the working-class members, Owen's diametrically opposite proposal that the workers must "own their own factories

[1] *Justice*, November 7, 1885.

[2] Printed in *Justice*, September 6, 1884.

[3] "The Decay of Trade Unions," by H. M. Hyndman, *Justice*, June 18, 1887.

and decide by vote who their managers and foremen shall be." [1] Above all we see the same faith in the near and inevitable advent of a sudden revolution, when "it will only need a compact minority to take advantage of some opportune accident that will surely come, to overthrow the present system, and once and for all lift the toilers from their present social degradation." [2] "Noble Robert Owen," says Mr. Hyndman in 1885, "seventy years ago perceived 'the utter impossibility of succeeding in permanently improving the condition of our population by any half measures.' We see the same truth if possible yet more clearly now. But the revolution which in his day was unprepared is now ripe and ready. . . . Nothing short of a revolution which shall place the producers of wealth in control of their own country can possibly change matters for the better. . . . Will it be peaceful? We hope it may. That does not depend upon us. But, peaceful or violent, the great social revolution of the nineteenth century is at hand, and if fighting should be necessary, the workers may at least remember the profound historical truth that 'Force is the midwife of progress delivering the old society pregnant with the new,' and reflect that they are striving for the final overthrow of a tyranny more degrading than the worst chattel slavery of ancient times." [3] "Let our mission be," he writes in 1887, "to help to band together the workers of the world for the great class struggle against their exploiters. No better date could be chosen for the establishment of such international action on a sound basis than the year 1889, which the classes look forward to with trembling and the masses with hope. I advocate no hasty outbreak, no premature and violent attempt

[1] "The Trade Union Congress," by John Burns, *Justice*, September 12, 1885.

[2] *Justice*, July 11, 1885.

[3] Ibid., July 18, 1885. The identity of purpose and methods between the two movements is, indeed, elsewhere directly asserted; see "Socialism in '34," *Justice*, April 19, 1884, and the extracts from the Owenite journals in the issue for July 25, 1885.

on the part of the people to realise the full Social-Democratic programme. But I do say that from this time onwards, we, as the Social-Democratic Labour Party of Great Britain, should make every effort to bear our part in the celebration by the international proletariat of the First Centenary of the great French Revolution, and thus to prepare for a complete International Social Revolution before the end of the century." [1]

The year 1889, instead of ushering in a "complete International Social Revolution" by a universal compact of the workers, turned the current of Socialist propaganda from revolutionary to constitutional channels. The advent of political Democracy had put out of date the project of "a combined assault by workers of every trade and grade against the murderous monopoly of the minority." [2] For a moment, at the very crisis of the dockers' struggle, the idea of a "General Strike" flickers up, only to be quickly abandoned as impracticable. When the problems of administration had actually to be faced by the new leaders the specially Owenite characteristics of the Socialist propaganda were quietly dropped. In January, 1889, Mr. John Burns was elected a member of the London County Council, and quickly found himself organising the beginnings of a bureaucratic municipal Collectivism, as far removed from Owen's "national companies" as from the conceptions of the Manchester School. Mr. Tom Mann, as president of the Dockers' Union, could not help discovering how impracticable it was to set to work his unemployed members, accustomed only to general labour, in the production for mutual exchange of the bread and clothing of which they were in need. And whether working in municipal committees, or at the head office of a great Union, both Mr. Burns and Mr. Mann had perforce to realise the impossibility of bringing about any sudden or simultaneous change in the social or industrial organisation of the whole community, or even of one town or trade.

[1] *Justice*, August 6, 1887. [2] Ibid. July 25, 1885.

Under these circumstances it is perhaps not surprising that Messrs. Burns and Mann left the Social-Democratic Federation, and found themselves hotly denounced by their old comrades.[1] With the defection of the New Unionists, revolutionary Socialism ceased to grow; and the rival propaganda of constitutional action became the characteristic feature of the English Socialist Movement. Far from abusing or depreciating Trade Unionism or Co-operation, the constitutional Collectivists urged it as a primary duty upon every working-class Socialist to become a member of his Trade Union, to belong to the local Co-operative Society, and generally to take as active a part as possible in all organisations. Instead of denouncing partial reforms as mischievous attempts to defeat "the Social Revolution," the New Unionist leaders appealed to their followers to put their own representatives on Vestries and Town Councils, and generally to use their electoral influence to bring about, in a regular and constitutional manner, the particular changes they had at heart. Instead of circulating calumnies against the personal character of Trade Union leaders, they flooded the Trade Union world with Socialist literature dealing not so much in rhetorical appeals or Utopian aspirations, as in economic expositions of the actual grievances of industrial life. The vague resolutions of the Trade Union Congresses were worked out in practical detail, or even embodied in draft bills which the local member of Parliament might be invited to introduce, or driven to support.

The new policy, adopted as it was by such prominent Socialists as Messrs. Burns, Mann, and Tillett, and Mrs. Besant, appeared, from 1889 onward, increasingly justified by its success. The Collectivist victories on the London School Board and County Council, the steady growth of municipal activity, and the increasing influence exercised by working-men members of representative bodies, went far to persuade both Socialists and Trade Unionists that

[1] From 1889 onwards the columns of *Justice* abound in abuse and denunciation of the leaders of the New Unionism.

the only practicable means of securing for the community the ownership and control of the means of production, lay in a wide extension of that national and municipal organisation of public services towards which Parliament and the Town Councils had already taken the first steps. In those industries in which neither national nor municipal administration was yet possible, the Socialists demanded such a regulation of the conditions of employment as would ensure to every worker a minimum Standard of Life. The extension of the Factory Acts and the more thorough administration of the Sanitary Law accordingly received a new impulse. In another direction the drastic taxation of Rent and Interest, pressed for by Land Nationalisers and Socialists alike, was justified as leading eventually to the collective absorption of all unearned incomes. In short, from 1889 onward, the chief efforts of the English Socialist Movement have been directed, not to bringing about a revolution, but to impregnating all the existing forces of society with Collectivist ideals and Collectivist principles.[1]

With the advent of the "New Unionism" of 1889–90

[1] In this development some share is to be attributed to the work of the Fabian Society, which, established in 1883, began in 1887 to exercise a growing influence on working-class opinion. The publication, in 1889, of *Fabian Essays in Socialism*, the circulation between 1887 and 1893 of three-quarters of a million copies of its series of "Fabian tracts," and the delivery of several thousand lectures a year in London and other industrial centres, have done something to substitute a practical and constitutional policy of Collectivist reform for the earlier revolutionary propaganda. Tom Mann, Ben Tillett, and other Trade Union leaders have, since 1889, been among the members of the parent Fabian Society, whilst the ninety independent local Fabian Societies in the provincial centres usually include many of the delegates to the local Trades Councils. Some account of the Society and its work will be found in *Zum Socialen Frieden*, by Dr. von Schulze Gaevernitz (Leipzig, 1891, 2 vols.). As members of the Society ourselves, we feel that we are unable fairly to estimate the amount of influence which it has exercised in the transformation described in the text. A superficial survey of the development of opinion is given in *Socialism in England*, by Sidney Webb (London, 1st edition, 1889; 2nd edition, 1893).

we close the historical portion of our work. It is, of course, impossible as yet to determine to what extent, and in what way, the Trade Union Movement has been permanently affected by the new movement. Nor is it easy, at this period, accurately to estimate the precise character of the new movement itself. We can in this direction offer the student only a brief account of what seem to us, in 1894, first, the ephemeral features, and secondly, the more durable results of an impulse which has not yet wholly spent its force.

If we were to believe some of the more enthusiastic apostles of the "New Unionism," we should imagine that the aggressive trade society of unskilled labourers, unencumbered with friendly benefits, was an unprecedented departure in the history of labour organisation. Those who have followed our history thus far will know better than to entertain such an illusion, itself an old characteristic of Trade Unionist revivals. The purely trade society is as old as Trade Unionism itself. Throughout the whole history of the movement we find the two types of societies coexisting. At special crises in the annals of Trade Unionism we see one or other of these types taking the lead, and becoming the "New Unionism" of that particular period. Both trade society and friendly society with trade objects were common in the eighteenth century. Legal persecution of trade combination brought to the front the Union cloaked in the guise of a benefit club; and it was mainly for organisations of this type that Place and Hume won the emancipation of 1824–5. In 1833–4 we find Place deploring as a mischievous innovation the growth of the new "Trades Unions" without friendly benefits. Twenty years later we see the leadership reverting to the "new model" of an elaborate trade friendly society, which, for a whole generation, was vehemently denounced by employers as a fraud on the provident workman. The "New Unionism" of 1852, described by so friendly a critic as Professor Beesly as a novel departure, has become, in its turn, the "Old

Unionism" of 1889, when the more progressive spirits again plumed themselves on eliminating from their brand-new organisations the enervating influences of friendly benefits.

A closer examination of the facts shows that this almost rhythmical alternation of type has been only apparent. The impartial student will notice that whilst the purely trade society has been persistently adhered to by certain important industries, such as the Coalminers and the Cotton-spinners, other trades, like the Engineers and the Iron-founders, have remained equally constant to the trade friendly society; whilst others, again, such as the Compositors and the Carpenters, have passed backwards and forwards from one model to the other. But besides this adaptation of type to the circumstances of particular industries, we see also a preference for the purely trade society on no higher ground than its cheapness. The high contributions and levies paid by the Cotton-spinners to their essentially trade society are as far beyond the means of the Agricultural Labourer or the Docker as the weekly premiums for superannuation, sick, and other benefits charged to the Amalgamated Engineer. When, as in 1833–4, 1872, and 1889, a wave of enthusiasm sweeps the unskilled labourers into the Trade Union ranks, it is obviously necessary to form, at any rate in the first instance, organisations which make no greater tax upon their miserable earnings than a penny or two-pence per week. The apparent rhythm of alternations between the two types of organisation is due, therefore, not to any general abandonment of one for the other, but to the accidental prominence, in certain crises of Trade Union history, of the Unions belonging to particular trades or classes of wage-earners. When, for instance, the cotton-spinners, the builders, and the unskilled labourers of 1834 loomed large to Francis Place as a revolutionary force, the purely trade society appeared to him to be the source of all that was evil in Trade Unionism. When, in 1848–52, the iron trades were

conspiring against piecework and overtime, it was especially the illicit combination of trade and friendly society which attracted the attention of the public, and called forth the denunciations of the capitalist class. And when in 1889 the dockers were stopping the trade of London, and the coalminers and cotton-spinners were pressing upon both political parties their demands for legislative interference, we see Mr. George Howell voicing the opposition to exclusively trade societies as dangerously militant bodies.[1]

If the purely trade society is no new thing, still less is the extension of Trade Unionism to the unskilled labourer an unprecedented innovation. The enthusiasm which, in 1872, enrolled a hundred thousand agricultural labourers in a few months, produced also numerous small societies of town labourers, some of which still survive. The London and Counties Labour League, established in 1872, has maintained its existence down to the present day. The expansion of 1852 led to the formation in Glasgow of a Labourers' Society, which is reputed to have enrolled thousands of members. But it is with the enthusiasm of 1833–4 that the movement of 1889–90 has in this respect the greatest analogy. The almost instantaneous conversion to Trade Unionism after the dock strike of tens of thousands of the unskilled labourers of the towns recalls, indeed, nothing so much as the rapid enrolment of recruits among the poorest wage-earners by the emissaries of the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union.

But however strongly the outward features of the wave of 1889–90 may remind the student of those of 1833–4, the characteristics peculiar to the new movement significantly measure the extent of the advance, both in social theory and social methods, made by the wage-earners in the two intervening generations. Time and experience alone will show how far the empirical Socialism of the Trade Unionist of to-day, with its eclectic opportunism,

[1] *Trade Unionism Old and New* (London, 1891), passim.

its preference for municipal collectivism, its cautious adaptation of existing social structure, may safely be pronounced superior in practicability to the revolutionary and universal Communism of Robert Owen. In truth the radical distinction between 1833–4 and 1889–90 is not a matter of the particular social theories which inspired the outbursts. To the great majority of the Trade Unionists the theories of the leaders at either date did but embody a vague aspiration after a more equitable social order. The practical difference—the difference reflected in the character and temper of the men attracted to the two movements, and of the attitude of the public towards them—is the difference of method and immediate action. Robert Owen, as we have seen, despised and rejected political action, and strove to form a new voluntary organisation which should supersede, almost instantaneously and in some unexplained way, the whole industrial, political, and social administration of the country. In this disdain of all existing organisations, and the suddenness of the complete "social revolution" which it contemplated, the Owenism of 1833–4 found, as we have seen, an echo in much of the Socialist propaganda of 1884–9. The leaders of the New Unionists, on the contrary, sought to bring into the ranks of existing organisations—the Trade Union, the Municipality, or the State—great masses of unorganised workers who had hitherto been either absolutely outside the pale, or inert elements within it. They aimed, not at superseding existing social structures, but at capturing them all in the interests of the wage-earners. Above all, they sought to teach the great masses of undisciplined workers how to apply their newly acquired political power so as to obtain, in a perfectly constitutional manner, whatever changes in legislation or administration they desired.

The difference in method between the "New Unionism" of 1833–4 and that of 1889–90 may, we think, be ascribed in the main to the difference between the circumstances under which the movements

arose. To Robert Owen, whose path was blocked on the political line by the disfranchisement of five out of six of the adult male population, open voting under intimidation, corrupt close corporations in the towns and a Whig oligarchy at the centre, the idea of relying on the constitutional instrument of the polling-booth must have appeared no less chimerical than his own programme appears to-day. The New Unionists of 1889–90, on the other hand, found ready for their use an extensive and all-embracing Democratic social structure, which it was impossible to destroy, and would have been foolish to attempt to ignore. The efforts of two generations of Radical Individualists and "Old Trade Unionists" had placed the legislative power and civil administration of the country in the hands of a hierarchy of popularly elected representative bodies. The great engine of taxation was, for instance, now under the control of the wage-earning voters instead of that of the landowning class. The Home Secretary and the factory inspector, the relieving officer and the borough surveyor, could be employed to carry out the behests of the workers instead of those of the capitalists. And thus it came about that the methods advocated by the New Unionists of 1889–94 resemble, not those of the Owenites of 1833–4, but much more the practical arts of political warfare so successfully pursued by the Junta of 1867–75.

We shall see the change which had come over the English working-class movement in the course of sixty years if we compare the leaders of the two movements which we have been contrasting. To Owen himself we may allow the privilege of his genius, which did not prevent him from being an extravagantly bad captain for a working-class movement. But in his leading disciples ignorance of industrial conditions, contemptuous indifference to facts and figures, and incapacity to measure, even in the smallest actions, the relation between the means and the end, stand in as marked contrast to the sober judgment of men like John Burns as they did to

the cautious shrewdness of Allan and Applegarth. It would indeed be easy to find many traits of personal likeness between Burns and Mann on the one hand, and Allan and Applegarth on the other. High personal character, scrupulous integrity, dignity or charm of manner, mark all four alike, and this resemblance of character is heightened by a noticeable resemblance in the nature of their activity. The day's work of Mr. Tom Mann at the head office of the Dockers' Union from 1889 to 1892, and that of Mr. John Burns in the London County Council and the lobby of the House of Commons, form close reproductions of Allan's activity at the general office of his Engineers, and Applegarth's assiduous attendance to Parliamentary Committees and Royal Commissions. In short, the ways and means of the leaders of the "New Unionism" remind the student, not of the mystic rites and skeleton mummery of the Owenite movement, but rather of the restless energy and political ingenuity of the Junta or the Trade Union Congress Parliamentary Committee in those early days when the old Trade Unionists were fighting for legislative reforms with a faith which was as wise as it was fervent and sincere.

How far the New Unionism of 1889–90 will permanently influence the Trade Union Movement it is, of course, impossible to determine. At the distance of four years from the primary outburst it is becoming easier every day to distinguish the unstable from the more permanent elements in it. The revulsion of feeling against the combination of friendly benefits with Trade Union purposes has largely disappeared, though the difficulty of levying high contributions upon ill-paid workers has prevented the complete adoption of the contrary policy.[1] The expansion of trade which began

[1] Thus the Dock, Wharf, and Riverside Labourers' Union now gives Funeral Benefit—usually the first to be added; whilst many of the branches have started their own sick funds. Some of the branches of the National Union of Gas-workers and General Labourers have local benefit funds, and the addition of Accident Benefit by the whole society is under discussion.

in 1889 proved to be but of brief duration, and with the returning contraction of 1892 many of the advantages gained by the wage-earners were lost. Under the influence of this check the unskilled labourers have once more largely fallen away from the Trade Union ranks, and it is at this moment uncertain whether the majority of the surviving societies of this class will be able to maintain a permanent place in the Trade Union world. Judging from their position it seems, however, highly probable that, just as 1873–4 left behind it a far more permanent structure than 1833–4, so 1889–90 will be found to have added even more than 1873–4. The older Unions show every sign of retaining a large part, at any rate, of the two hundred thousand members added to their ranks between 1887 and 1891. But this numerical accession is, perhaps, of less importance than what may, without exaggeration, be termed the spiritual rebirth of organisations which were showing signs of decrepitude. The selfish spirit of exclusiveness which often marked the relatively well-paid engineer, carpenter, or boilermaker of 1880–5, has given place to a more generous recognition of the essential solidarity of the wage-earning class. For example, the whole constitution of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers was, in 1892, revised for the express purpose of opening the ranks of this most aristocratic of Unions to practically all the mechanics in the innumerable branches of the engineering trade. Special facilities, moreover, are now offered by this and the other great societies to old men and artisans earning wages insufficient to pay for costly friendly benefits. Nor is this all. The plumber now vies with the engineer, the carpenter with the shipwright, in helping to form Unions among the labourers who work with or under them. And the struggling Unions of women workers, which had originally some difficulty in gaining admittance to Trades Councils and the Trade Union Congress, now gratefully acknowledge a complete change in the attitude of their male fellow-workers. Not only is

every assistance now given to the formation of special Unions among women workers, but women are, in some cases, even welcomed as members by Unions of skilled artisans.[1] A similar widening of sympathies and strengthening of bonds of fellowship is shown in the very general establishment of local joint committees of rival societies in the same trade, as well as of larger federations. Mr. Robert Knight's failures to form a federal council representing the different Unions concerned in shipbuilding were retrieved in 1891 by his successful establishment of the Federation of the Engineering and Shipbuilding Trades, which bids fair to maintain a permanent existence. And though the Amalgamated Society of Engineers still stands aloof from this federation, the Trades Councils in most towns can now reckon the local branches of the engineers among their constituents. The increased sense of solidarity among all sections of wage-earners has, moreover, led to a greatly increased cordiality in international relations. The Coalminers, the Glass-bottlemakers, and the Textile Operatives have established more or less formal federations with their fellow-workers on the Continent of Europe. And at the frequent international Congresses of these trades, as well as at the Socialist Congress of the workers of all countries, the representatives of the English Trade Unions have laid aside that insular conceit which led the Parliamentary Committee of 1884 to declare that, owing to his superiority, the English Trade Unionist derived no benefit from international relations. All this indicates a widening of the mental horizon, a genuine elevation of the Trade Union Movement. We shall analyse it more thoroughly in a subsequent volume. It only remains for us here to give the student, in a final chapter, some idea of the extent and component elements of the Trade Union world of to-day.

[1] One woman has even been admitted a member of the London Society of Compositors, on its being proved that she earned the full standard rate.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE TRADE UNION WORLD.

[1892–1894.]

We have sought to obtain in the course of our investigation a complete census of Trade Unionism from one end of the kingdom to the other, and although a certain number of small local societies may have escaped our notice, we feel confident that our statistics include every existing society containing 1,000 members, as well as nearly all those falling below that figure. From these researches we estimate that the total Trade Union membership in the United Kingdom at the end of 1892 certainly exceeded 1,500,000, and probably did not reach 1,600,000.[1] The Trade Unionists number, therefore, about 4 per cent. of the total population.

[1] No precise census of Trade Unionists exists. Until the appointment of Mr. John Burnett as Labour Correspondent of the Board of Trade in 1886, no attempt was made to compile any statistics of Trade Unionism. The five annual volumes published by Mr. Burnett since that date contain a fund of information on Trade Union statistics, and the returns become year by year more complete. The last report (that for 1891) gave particulars of 431 Unions with 1,109,014 members, whilst that for 1892 will, it is understood, cover a larger total. But, restricted as he has been to societies making returns in the precise form required, Mr. Burnett has hitherto not included the membership of many existing Unions, whilst a considerable deduction must be made from his total for members counted both in district organisations and in federations. The Chief Registrar of Friendly Societies gives particulars, in his Report for

But to gauge the strength of the Trade Union world, we must compare the number of Trade Unionists, not with the total population, but with that portion of it which might conceivably be included within its boundaries. Thus at the outset we must ignore the propertied classes, the professions, the employers and the brain-workers of every kind, and confine our attention exclusively to the wage-earners engaged in manual work. Even of the working-class so defined we must exclude the children and the youths under twenty-one, who are not usually eligible for Trade Union membership. The women present a greater difficulty to the statistician. The female wage-earners engaged in manual labour are estimated to number between two and three millions, of which only about 100,000 are even nominally within the Trade Union ranks. How far Trade Unionism is weakened by its failure to enrol the women workers is doubtful. From the industrial point of view the answer depends on complicated economic considerations, such as the extent to which women compete with men in particular industries, or women's trades with those in which men are employed. Owing to the exclusion of women from the Parliamentary franchise, their absence from the Trade Union world detracts little

1892 (House of Commons paper, 146—II. of March 28, 1893), of 1,063,000 members in 442 registered Trade Unions alone, after deducting organisations which are not Trade Unions, and many duplicate entries. A large number of societies, such as the Northern Counties Amalgamated Weavers' Association, many of the Miners' Unions, the English and Scottish Typographical Associations, the United Kingdom Society of Coachmakers, the Flint Glass Makers, the Yorkshire Glass Bottle Makers, and others are unregistered. It is difficult to state with exactness the number of separate organisations included in our own statistics, as this must depend upon the manner in which federal bodies are regarded. These exhibit almost infinite variations in character, from the mere "centre of communication" maintained by the thirty-two completely independent local societies of Coopers, to the rigid unity of the forty district organisations which make up the Amalgamated Association of Operative Cotton-spinners. The number of independent societies may be reckoned at either 930 or at anything up to 1750, according to the view taken of federal Unions and federations.

from its political force. We propose in a future volume to deal at length with the relation of women workers to the Trade Union organisation. Meanwhile we shall omit the women as well as the young persons under twenty-one from our consideration of the place occupied by Trade Unionism in working-class life.

We know of no exact statistics as to the total numbers of the manual-working class. The figures collected by Leone Levi, and those of Mr. Giffen, together with the inferences to be drawn from the census and from Mr. Charles Booth's works, lead us to the conclusion—at best only hypothetical—that of the nine millions of men over twenty-one years of age, about seven millions belong to the manual-working class. Out of every hundred of the population of all ages we may roughly estimate that about eighteen are in this sense working men adults. Accepting for the moment this hypothetical estimate, we arrive at the conclusion that the Trade Unionists number about 20 per cent. of the adult male manual-working class, or, roughly, one man in five.

But this revised percentage is itself misleading. If the million and a half Trade Unionists were evenly distributed among all occupations and through all districts, a movement which comprised only 20 per cent. of working men would be of slight economic or industrial importance, and of no great weight in the political world. What gives the Trade Union Movement its significance and transforms these million and a half units into an organised world of their own, is the massing of Trade Unionists in certain industries and districts in such a way as to form a powerful majority of the working-class world.

In the map at the end of the present chapter we have endeavoured to give a graphic representation of this unequal distribution so far as the counties of England and Wales are concerned. The reader will perceive at a glance how thickly the Trade Unionists are aggregated in the thriving industrial districts of the North of England. The seven counties north of the Humber and the Dee

contain at least 726,000 members of trade societies, or almost half of the total for the United Kingdom. At a considerable distance from these follow the industrial Midlands, where the seven counties of Leicester, Derby, Notts, Warwick, Gloucester, Northampton, and Stafford include a total Trade Union membership of at least 210,000, whilst South Wales, including Monmouthshire, counts another 89,000 members of trade societies. The vast agglomeration of the London district, in which we must reckon Middlesex, the subsidiary boroughs of West Ham, Croydon, Richmond and Kingston, as well as Bromley in Kent, yields not more than 194,000 Trade Unionists.

These four districts, comprising nearly 21,000,000 inhabitants, or rather more than two-thirds of the population of England and Wales, possess twelve-thirteenths of its Trade Unionists. The total Trade Union membership in the remainder of the country, with its 8,000,000 of population, does not exceed 105,000, largely labourers. The only county in England in which we have found no trace of Trade Union organisation is Rutland, which does not contain a single branch of any Union whatsoever. But Huntingdonshire, Herefordshire, and Dorsetshire, containing together over 350,000 inhabitants, include, according to our estimate, only about 710 Trade Unionists between them. Scotland, with four millions of population, has 147,000 Trade Unionists, nearly all aggregated in the narrow industrial belt between the Clyde and the Forth, two-thirds of the total, indeed, belonging to Glasgow and the neighbouring industrial centres. Ireland, with three-quarters of a million more population, counts but 40,000, nine-tenths of whom belong to Dublin, Belfast, Cork, and Limerick.

Examining the map more closely, we see that of particular counties, Northumberland and Durham take the lead, closely followed by Lancashire. The annexed table supplies particulars for the strongest Trade Union counties in England and Wales.

Table showing, for certain counties in England, and for South Wales, the total population in 1891, *the ascertained number of Trade Unionists in* 1892, *and the percentage to population in each case.*

County.	Total Population in 1891.	Ascertained Number of Members of Trade Societies in 1892.	Percentage of Trade Unionists to Population.
Northumberland ...	506,030	56,815	11·23
Durham	1,024,369	114,810	11·21
Lancashire	3,957,906	331,535[1]	8·63
Yorkshire, E. Riding	318,570	23,630	7·42
Leicestershire	379,286	27,845	7·34
Derbyshire	432,414	29,510	6·82
South Wales and Monmouthshire...	1,325,315	88,810	6·70
Nottinghamshire ...	505,311	31,050	6·14
Yorkshire, W. Riding	2,464,415	141,140	5·73
Gloucestershire	548,886	26,030	4·74
Cheshire	707,978	32,000	4·52
Staffordshire	1,103,452	49,545	4·49
Suffolk	353,758	14,885	4·21
Warwickshire	801,738	33,600	4·19
Northampton.....	308,072	12,210	3·96
Cumberland	266,549	10,280	3·86
London District (including Middlesex, Croydon, West Ham, Richmond, Kingston, and Bromley	5,517,583	194,083	3·52
Yorkshire, N. Riding with York City...	435,897	15,215	3·49
Totals.....	20,957,529	1,232,993	5·89

No other county has 15,000 Trade Unionists, nor as much as 3 per cent. of its population in trade societies.

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[1] Of these, some 80,000 are women. Fully four-fifths of all the organised women workers are included in the Lancashire textile Trade Unions.

This superficial investigation shows us at once that Trade Unionism coincides in the main with density of population. The thinly peopled plains of Dorsetshire, the Highlands of Scotland, the West of Ireland, the Cumberland and Westmoreland Hills are practically devoid of Trade Unionism; the valleys of the Tyne and Tees, Lancashire and London, and the busy industrial villages of the Midlands show a comparatively high percentage. But the correspondence of Trade Unionism with density of population is by no means exact. Oldham, for instance, with a population of 201,153, has 25,000 male Unionists,[1] or 12·43 per cent., whereas Birmingham (including suburbs of Aston, Handsworth, and Solihull), with 621,253, has only 26,000, or 4·19 per cent. Newcastle (including Gateshead), with 328,066 inhabitants, has 26,500 Trade Unionists, or 8·08 per cent., whilst Leeds (including Wortley, Hunslet, and Burley) has but 16,000 to a population of 415,243, or 3·85 per cent. And, most striking exception of all, the crowded five and a half millions of the Metropolitan area have but 194,000 Trade Unionists, or only 3·52 per cent. of its population, whilst Lancashire, even including its northern moorlands and its wide agricultural districts, has 332,000 for less than four millions of people, or 8·63 per cent. of its population. Reckoning that 18 out of every 100 of the population are adult male workmen, Trade Unionism thus counts among its adherents in some counties over 50 per cent. of the total number of working men.

But even this percentage fails to give any adequate idea of the extent to which Trade Unionism dominates the industrial centres in which it is strongest. Within the concentration by localities, there is a further concentration by trades—a fact which to a large extent explains the geographical distribution. The following table shows in what proportion the leading industries contribute to the total Trade Union forces.

[1] There are altogether about 45,000 Unionists in Oldham, but of these some 20,000 are women.

Table showing the approximate number of members of trade societies in 1892 according to industries, in the different parts of the United Kingdom.

Trade.	England and Wales.[1]	Scotland.	Ireland.	Total.
Engineering and Metal Trades	233,450	45,300	8,250	287,000
Building Trades	114,500	24,950	8,550	148,000
Mining	325,750	21,250	—	347,000
Textile Manufactures	184,270	12,330	3,400	200,000
Clothing and Leather Trades	78,650	8,400	2,950	90,000
Printing Trades	37,950	5,650	2,400	46,000
Miscellaneous Crafts	46,550	7,450	4,000	58,000
Labourers and Transport Workers	302,880	21,670	10,450	335,000
Totals	1,324,000	147,000	40,000	1,511,000[2]

For the general reader, the map, together with the foregoing table showing the industrial distribution of Trade Unionism, completes our statistical survey of the Trade Union world. To the student of Trade Union statistics a more particular enumeration may be useful. Before we attempt to picture Trade Union life, we shall therefore devote a dozen pages (which the general

[1] Including the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man, which contain together about 1,285 Trade Unionists.

[2] Included in the above total are 99,650 women in 52 Unions, distributed among the groups as follows:—

Engineering and Metal Trades	2,850
Building and Furniture Trades	300
Mining	—
Textile Manufactures	80,900
Clothing and Leather Trades	8,650
Printing Trades	400
Miscellaneous Crafts	3,450
Labourers and Transport Workers	3,100
	99,650

reader may with a clear conscience skip) to the dry facts of organisation in each of the eight great divisions into which we have distributed the Trade Union membership.

The first division, comprising all the numerous ramifications of the engineering, metal-working, and shipbuilding trades, is characterised by old-established and highly developed national Unions, with large membership, centralised administration, and extensive friendly benefits. The 287,000 Trade Unionists in this division are enrolled in over 260 separate societies, but almost one-half belong to one or other of four great national organisations, the Amalgamated Society of Engineers (established 1851), the United Society of Boilermakers and Iron Shipbuilders (established 1832),[1] the Friendly Society of Ironfounders of England, Ireland, and Wales (established 1809), and the Associated Society of Shipwrights, a belated amalgamation formed in 1882 by the many ancient local Unions of wooden shipbuilders. Of these great Unions, that of the Boilermakers, with 39,000 members, is incomparably the strongest, having no rival for the allegiance of its trade, and including practically the whole body of skilled workmen engaged in iron shipbuilding and boilermaking from one end of the United Kingdom to the other. The great Unions of Ironfounders and Shipwrights, with respectively 15,000 and 14,000 members, are not quite so universal as the Boilermakers. The Associated Society of Ironmoulders (Ironfounders) of Scotland (established 1831), with 6,000 members and a few minor Unions of less skilled ironfounders, have maintained separate organisations; whilst the Shipwrights' Provident Union of the Port of London (established 1824, 1,400 members), the Liverpool Trade

[1] The Boilermakers claim only to have been established since 1834, but there is evidence of the existence of the Society in 1832. In a few other cases, notably those of the Stonemasons, Plumbers, and Bricklayers, we have been able to carry the history of the organisation further back than has hitherto been suspected.

and Friendly Association of Shipwrights (established 1800, 1,400 members), and a few other old-fashioned port Unions still hold aloof from the Shipwrights' amalgamation.[1] The Amalgamated Society of Engineers, the largest centralised Trade Union in the kingdom, with 66,000 members at home and 5,000 abroad, towers over all its rivals, but has to compete with compact sectional or local Unions, admitting one or more of the numerous classes of workmen in the engineering and machine-making trade.[2] Among the actual producers of iron and steel, the British Steel Smelters' Association (established 1886), with 2,400 members, originally a Scotch Union, is extending all over the kingdom; whilst the Associated Society of Iron and Steel Workers (established 1862), with 7,800 members, occupies a unique position in the Trade Union world from its long and constant devotion to the sliding scale. The tin and hollow-ware workers,[3] the chippers and drillers, the Sheffield cutlers, and the craftsmen in precious metals are split up into innumerable local societies, with little federal union.

[1] The equally archaic port Unions of the Sailmakers, dating, like those of the Shipwrights, from the last century, are united in the Federation of Sailmakers of Great Britain and Ireland (established 1890), with 1,250 members.

[2] Of these the most important are Steam-Engine Makers' Society (established 1824, 6,000 members), the Associated Blacksmiths' Society (a Scottish organisation, established 1857, 2,300 members), the United Kingdom Pattern Makers' Association (established 1872, 2,500 members), the National Society of Amalgamated Brassworkers (established 1872, 6,500 members), the United Journeymen Brassfounders' Association of Great Britain and Ireland (established 1866, 2,500 members), and the United Machine Workers' Association (established 1844, 2,500 members).

[3] The makers of tin plates have a Union in South Wales (established 1871, and reorganised 1887) which claims a membership of 10,000. The National Amalgamated Tinplate Workers' Association of Great Britain (established 1876) has 3,000 members, and the General Union of Sheet Metal Workers (established 1861) has 1,250 members.

It is interesting to notice the large proportion which this division of Trade Unionists in Scotland bears to the total for that country. Whilst in England and Wales it forms only one-sixth of the aggregate number, in Scotland it measures nearly one-third, almost entirely centred about Glasgow.

Table showing the approximate number of Trade Unionists in each group of the Engineering and Shipbuilding Trades.

Trade.	England.	Scotland.	Ireland.	Total.
Engineers and Machine Makers	74,000	8,250	2,750	85,000
Smiths and Farriers.....	7,350	2,250	300	9,900
Brass and Copper Workers...	13,350	2,000	150	15,500
Sheet Metal Workers.....	16,000	1,300	200	17,500
Ironfounders and Coremakers	15,500	7,250	500	23,250
Shipbuilding and Boiler-making	45,500	13,250	3,600	62,350
Iron and Steel Smelters	23,500	1,500	—	25,000
Workers in Precious Metals	3,500	—	—	3,500
Sundry Metal Workers	34,750	9,500	750	45,000
Totals	233,450	45,300	8,250	287,000

The organisation of Builders and Furniture Makers resembles in many respects that of the Engineers and Shipbuilders. The 148,000 Trade Unionists in this division are sorted into 120 separate Unions; but again we find one half of them belonging to one or other of three centralised Trade Friendly Societies of national scope. Of these the Friendly Society of Operative Stonemasons (established 1832, 16,000 members) is the most powerful, having practically no rival throughout England or Ireland, and maintaining friendly relations with the corresponding United Operative Masons' Association of Scotland (established 1831, 5,500 members).

But the largest and richest Union in this division is the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners (established 1860, 34,000 members at home and 4,000 abroad). Although this Society can count but a small proportion of the total number of carpenters in the kingdom, it includes three-fourths of those who are Trade Unionists, the remaining fourth being divided between the Associated Carpenters and Joiners of Scotland (established 1861, 6,000 members), the old General Union of Carpenters and Joiners of England (established 1827, 4,000 members), and a few tiny trade clubs in the Metropolis which have refused to merge themselves in either of the national organisations. The Bricklayers are in much the same position as the Carpenters. The Operative Bricklayers' Society (established 1848, 22,000 members) now includes three-fourths of the Trade Unionists, the remainder being found either in the United Operative Bricklayers' Trade, Accident, and Burial Society (established 1832, 2,500 members), or in a few isolated local trade clubs in Scotland and Ireland. Of the other Unions in the Building Trades, the United Operative Plumbers' Association of Great Britain and Ireland (established 1832, reorganised 1865, 6,500 members) is by far the most effective and compact, and is specially interesting as retaining practically the federal constitution of the Builders' Union of 1830–4. With the exception of the United Operative Plumbers' Association of Scotland (established 1872, 700 members), a small society resulting from a secession, no rival organisation exists. On the other hand, the Painters, Slaters, Packing-case Makers, Upholsterers, and French Polishers are split up into numberless small Unions, whilst the Cabinetmakers and Plasterers have each one considerable organisation [1] and several smaller societies, which, however, include but a small proportion of the trade.

[1] The Alliance Cabinetmakers' Association (established 1865, 5,500 members) and the National Association of Operative Plasterers (established 1862, 7,000 members).

Table showing the approximate number of Trade Unionists in the various branches of the Building and Furniture Trades.

Trade.	England.	Scotland.	Ireland.	Total.
Stonemasons	16,750	8,250	250	25,250
Bricklayers	24,000	700	2,300	27,000
Carpenters	33,000	7,850	3,250	44,100
Cabinetmakers	7,200	2,000	300	9,500
Sawyers and other Wood-workers	4,250	350	150	4,750
Plasterers	7,500	1,000	500	9,000
Painters	12,400	2,150	1,000	15,550
Plumbers	5,400	1,200	400	7,000
Upholsterers and French Polishers	2,500	450	300	3,250
Sundry Building Trades	1,500	1,000	100	2,600
Totals	114,500	24,950	8,550	148,000

The Miners and Quarrymen, comprising about sixty-five societies, are, at the present time, the best organised of the eight great divisions into which we have classified the Trade Union forces. Among the coalminers the "county," or district Union, without friendly benefits, is the predominating type. Nearly two-thirds of the whole 347,000 Trade Unionists in this division are gathered into the Miners' Federation of Great Britain (established 1888), a federal Union comprising about twenty independent organisations, some of which, like the Yorkshire Miners' Association (established 1858, 55,000 members), are highly centralised, whilst others, like the Lancashire Miners' Federation (established 1881, 43,000 members), are themselves federal bodies. The Miners' Federation, whilst not interfering with the financial autonomy or internal administration of its constituent bodies, effectively centralises the industrial and Parliamentary policy of the whole army of its members from Fife to Somerset. Outside the Federation stand the powerful and compact Northumberland Miners' Mutual Confident Association

(established 1863, 17,000 members), and Durham Miners' Association (established 1869, 50,000 members), together with the solid little Mid and West Lothian Miners' Association (established 1885, 3,600 members), and the loose organisations of Sliding Scale contributors which figure as Trade Unions in South Wales.[1] The coal and iron miners of the West of Scotland have scarcely got beyond the ephemeral pit club and occasional Strike Union. Among the tin, lead, and copper miners Trade Unionism is, as far as we can ascertain, absolutely unknown.

Table showing the approximate number of Trade Unionists among the persons engaged in or about Mines and Quarries.

Trade.	England.	Scotland.	Ireland.	Total.
Coal and Iron Miners.....	301,000	17,500	—	318,500
Colliery Enginemen	5,000	1,500	—	6,500
Cokemen, Overmen, Colliery Mechanics, &c.	9,250	500	—	9,750
Quarrymen	10,500	—	—	10,500
Shale Oil Workers	—	1,750	—	1,750
Totals	325,750	21,250	—	347,000

The salient fact of Trade Unionism among the textile operatives is that effective organisation is nearly confined to the workers in cotton, who contribute at least two-thirds of the 200,000 Trade Unionists in this division.

[1] The South Wales miners are in a transition state. The Miners' Federation has gained a considerable following in Monmouthshire and Glamorgan, but the bulk of the men still adhere to the Sliding Scale machinery, claiming 36,000 members, for the maintenance of which a fortnightly contribution is usually deducted by the employers from the miners' earnings. The Forest of Dean Miners' Association (4,000 members) seceded from the Federation in 1893. A small Miners' Union (2,250 members) at West Bromwich also holds aloof.

Like the Miners the Cotton Operatives show a strong preference for federal Associations with exclusively trade objects. The powerful Amalgamated Association of Operative Cotton-spinners (established 1853), a federal Union of 19,500 members comprising forty separate district associations, joins with its sister federations, the Northern Counties Amalgamated Association of Weavers (established 1884, 71,000 members) and the Amalgamated Association of Card and Blowing Room Operatives (31,000 members, established 1886), in the United Textile Factory Workers' Association (established 1886). This Association, formed exclusively for Parliamentary purposes, focusses the very considerable political influence of 125,000 organised cotton operatives in Lancashire, Cheshire, and Yorkshire, and is, next to the Miners' Federation, to which it bears a marked resemblance, by far the most powerful Trade Union organisation in the country.[1]

The highly developed organisation of the Cotton Operatives contrasts with the non-Unionism of the Woollen-workers. In the other branches of textile manufacture the extreme localisation of the separate industries has given rise to isolated county or district organisations of lace, hosiery, silk, flax, or carpet-workers usually confined to small areas, and exercising comparatively little influence in the Trade Union world. Incomparably the strongest among them is the Amalgamated Society of Operative Lacemakers (3,500 members), which comprises practically all the adult male workers in the Nottingham machine-lace trade. If we exclude the constituent organisations of the United Textile Factory Workers' Association, the separate Unions in the various branches of the textile industry number 115.

[1] The Cotton-spinners' Union is composed exclusively of adult males, the boy "piecers" being brigaded in subordinate organisations. In the Cotton-weavers and Card-room Operatives' Unions women form a large majority of the members.

Table showing the approximate number of Trade Unionists in the various branches of the Textile Manufacture.

Trade.	England.	Scotland.	Ireland.	Total.
Cotton-spinners	19,500	—	—	19,500
Cotton-weavers	82,500	500	—	83,000
Cotton Card-room Operatives	31,000	—	—	31,000
Woollen-workers.....	6,000	9,500	—	15,500
Woolsorters, Combers, &c....	2,500	—	—	2,500
Silkworkers	2,500	—	60	2,560
Flax and Linen-workers.....	150	300	2,940	3,390
Carpet-weavers	2,600	400	—	3,000
Hosiery-workers	6,350	100	50	6,500
Lacemakers	4,500	—	—	4,500
Elastic Webworkers	700	—	—	700
Dyers, Bleachers, and Finishers	11,820	180	100	12,100
Overlookers.....	4,850	200	200	5,250
Calico-printers and Engravers	1,950	500	50	2,500
Miscellaneous Textiles	7,350	650	—	8,000
Totals	184,270	12,330	3,400	200,000

The large section of workers engaged in the manufacture of clothing and leather goods are, perhaps, the least organised of the skilled trades. One society, indeed, the National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives (established 1874), counts almost 43,000 members, and exercises a very real control over the machine boot trade. And although the hand industry is, in this case, rapidly declining, the Amalgamated Association of Boot and Shoemakers (established 1862) maintains and even increases the earnings of this body of 4,700 skilled handicraftsmen. The Tailors, on the other hand, have succeeded neither in controlling the new machine industry, nor in upholding the standard earnings of the handworkers. The Amalgamated Society of Tailors (established 1866, 17,000 members), together with the Scottish National Operative Tailors' Society (established 1866, 4,500 members), have absorbed all the local

Unions, but include only a small proportion of those at work in the trade. The Felt Hatters and Trimmers' Union (established 1872) has 4,300 members, together with a women's branch (established 1886) numbering nearly as many. In other branches of this division some strong organisations exist in the smaller industries, but the workers for the most part form only feeble local clubs or else are totally unorganised. There are altogether over sixty separate Unions in this division.

Table showing the approximate number of Trade Unionists in the Clothing and Leather Trades.

Trade.	England.	Scotland.	Ireland.	Total.
Boot and Shoemakers	46,250	2,250	500	49,000
Other Leather Workers.....	5,900	550	100	6,550
Tailors and other Clothing Makers	16,100	5,500	2,300	23,900
Hatmakers, Glovers, &c. ...	10,400	100	50	10,550
Totals	78,650	8,400	2,950	90,000

The 46,000 Trade Unionists in the paper and printing trades are divided between four considerable Unions with 27,000 members, and forty-five little societies numbering not more than 19,000 altogether. The compositors lead off with three extensive organisations, the London Society of Compositors, confined to the Metropolis (established 1848, 9,800 members), the Typographical Association (established 1849, 11,500 members), which has absorbed all but four of the Irish and four of the English local societies outside the Metropolis, and the Scottish Typographical Association (established 1852, 3,000 members). The Bookbinders and Machine Rulers' Consolidated Union (established 1835, 3,000 members), mainly composed of provincial workers, far exceeds the London Consolidated Bookbinders' Society, the largest of half a dozen Metropolitan Unions in this trade.

Table showing the approximate number of Trade Unionists in the various branches of the Paper and Printing Trades.

Trade.	England.	Scotland.	Ireland.	Total.
Compositors and Press and Machine Men	27,250	4,000	2,000	33,250
Bookbinders	5,150	700	300	6,150
Papermakers	3,150	500	—	3,650
Miscellaneous Printing Trades	2,400	450	100	2,950
Totals	37,950	5,650	2,400	46,000

There remain a number of trades which it is difficult to classify. These miscellaneous crafts furnish over 130 societies and 58,000 Trade Unionists. Some, like the Coopers, Cigarmakers, Brushmakers, Basketmakers, and Glassworkers, are usually well organised ; others, like the Coachbuilders, Potters, Bakers, and Ropeworkers, include but a small percentage of their trades.[1]

Table showing the approximate number of Trade Unionists in the Miscellaneous Trades.

Trade.	England.	Scotland.	Ireland.	Total.
Basket and Brushmakers	2,800	350	100	3,250
Coach and Waggon Builders	6,000	400	600	7,000
Coopers	4,400	1,300	300	6,000
Glassworkers	7,350	500	150	8,000
Millers and Bakers	7,000	2,500	2,500	12,000
Potters	6,250	1,650	—	7,900
Sundry Trades	12,750	750	350	13,850
Totals	46,550	7,450	4,000	58,000

[1] The United Kingdom Society of Coachmakers (established 1834) has 5,500 members. The Mutual Association of Coopers (established 1878) is a loose federation of old-fashioned local Unions, with about 6,000 members.

The great army of labourers, seamen, and transport workers of every kind we have enclosed in a single division. Out of the 120 organisations belonging to this group the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants (established 1872), with its permanent membership of 31,000, its high contributions, extensive friendly benefits, and large accumulated funds, resembles in character the large national societies of the engineering and building trades. Some other Unions in this group, such as the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (established 1880, 7,000 members), the London and Counties Labour League (established 1872, 13,000 members), and the National Agricultural Labourers' Union (established 1872, 15,000 members), have become essentially friendly societies. But the predominating type in this division is, as might have been expected, the new Union, with low contributions, fluctuating membership, and militant trade policy. Of these the strongest and apparently the most stable is the National Union of Gasworkers and General Labourers (established 1889), with 36,000 members on the books. Next in membership come the Dock, Wharf, and Riverside Labourers' Union (established 1889), the Tyneside and National Labour Union (established 1889), and the National Amalgamated Sailors and Firemen's Union (established 1887), each with a membership fluctuating between 20,000 and 40,000. Other prominent Unions in this division are the General Railway Workers' Union (established 1889), the National Union of Dock Labourers (established 1889), the National Amalgamated Coalporters' Union (established 1890), and the Navvies, Bricklayers' Labourers, and General Labourers' Union (established 1890). The builders' labourers and the carmen are organised in numerous local Unions, which, in some cases, such as the Mersey Quay and Railway Carters' Union (established 1887), and the Leeds Amalgamated Association of Builders' Labourers (established 1889), are effective trade societies. The chief exponent of

New Unionism among the agricultural labourers is the Eastern Counties Labour Federation (established 1890), which has enrolled 17,000 members in Suffolk and the neighbouring counties. But any statistical estimate of the ill-defined and constantly fluctuating membership of the Unions in this division must necessarily be of less value than in the more definitely organised trades.[1]

Table showing the approximate number of Trade Unionists among the Labourers and Transport workers of every kind.

Trade.	England.	Scotland.	Ireland.	Total.
Seamen, Fishermen, Watermen, &c.	33,850	3,900	1,500	39,250
Railway Traffic Workers ...	43,500	1,500	3,000	48,000
Enginemen, &c. (other than Colliery or Railway)	6,300	370	100	6,770
Carmen, &c.	19,000	3,500	1,000	23,500
Miscellaneous Labourers ...	200,230	12,400	4,850	217,480
Totals	302,880	21,670	10,450	335,000

It would have been an interesting addition to our statistics if we could have added to these tables a column showing the proportion which the Unionists in each trade bear to the total number of workers in it. Unfortu-

[1] We have not included in the above statistics the Unions formed among classes not usually included among the manual workers. The National Union of Teachers, established 1870, is a powerful organisation with 23,000 members. The Telegraph Clerks, Life Assurance Agents, and Shop Assistants also have Unions varying from 1,000 to 5,000 members, and there are two organisations of postmen. The National Unions of Clerks and Domestic Servants are less definitely established. There are also small societies among the London Dock Foremen and Clerks and the Poplar Ships' Clerks.

Nor have we included such essentially benefit societies as the Marine Engineers' Union (9,500 members) and the United Kingdom Pilots' Association, which are composed largely of workmen belonging for trade purposes to particular Trade Unions.

nately the classification of the census[1] is not sufficiently precise to enable this to be done. We are therefore thrown back upon such information on the point as we can obtain from other sources. We know, for instance, that in Lancashire the Amalgamated Association of Cotton-spinners includes practically every competent workman engaged in the trade. The same might be said of the Boilermakers' Society in all the iron shipbuilding ports, though not in some of the Midland districts. And to turn to an even larger industry, 80 per cent. of the coalminers are at present in Union, some districts, such as Northumberland and parts of the West Riding of Yorkshire, having practically every hewer in the society. And in other industries and localities the Union is sometimes equally inclusive. Among the Dublin Coopers or the Midland Flint Glass Makers, the Nottingham Lacemakers or the Yorkshire Glass Bottle Makers, non-Unionism is practically unknown. We see, therefore, that instead of numbering only 4 per cent. of the total population, the Trade Union world is, in certain districts and in certain industries, practically coextensive with the manual labour class. On the other hand, there are many occupations in which Trade Unionism is non-existent. Whole classes of manual workers are practically excluded from the Trade Union ranks by the fact that they are not hired workers at wages. In the nooks and crannies of our industrial system are to be found countless manual workers who obtain a precarious livelihood by direct service of the consumer. Every town and village has its quota of hawkers, costermongers, tallymen, and other petty dealers; of cobblers, tinkers, knifegrinders, glaziers, chairmenders,

[1] The census figures merge, for each trade, "workmen, assistants, apprentices, and labourers." They do not, for instance, distinguish between Bricklayers and Bricklayers' Labourers, who belong to very different Trade Unions. Under Hosiers or Hatters are included shopkeepers and their assistants, as well as the manufacturing operatives.

plumbers, and other jobbing craftsmen; of cab-runners, "corner boys," men who "hang about the bridges," and all the innumerable parasites of the life of a great city. When we pass from these "independent producers" to the trades in which the small master survives, or in which home work prevails, we find another region almost barren of Trade Unionism. The tailors and cabinet-makers, for instance, though often highly-skilled crafts-men, have only a small minority of their trades in Union, whilst the chain and nailmakers are almost unorganised. The effect upon Trade Unionism of a backward type of industrial organisation is well seen in the manufacture of boots and shoes. In Leicestershire and Stafford, where the work is done in large factories, practically every workman is in the Union. In the Midland villages, where this is carried on as a domestic industry, and in East London, where it is only now passing out of that phase, the National Society of Boot and Shoe Operatives counts but a small proportion of members. And in those districts in which the small master system still holds its own it casts a blight even on other trades. Thus the Birmingham district and East London are bad Trade Union centres, not only for the sweated trades, but also for those carried on in large establishments. But the great bulk of non-Unionism is to be found in another field. The great army of labourers, as distinguished from mechanics, miners, or factory operatives, are in normal times as unorganised as the women workers. Except in certain counties, such as Kent, Suffolk, Norfolk, Oxfordshire, Wiltshire, and the Fen districts, Trade Unionism among the farm labourers can scarcely be said to exist. Of the three-quarters of a million of agricul-tural labourers in the United Kingdom, not more than 40,000 are now in Union. Nor are the other classes of labour in much better plight. The two hundred thou-sand workers in the traffic department of the railways contribute only 48,000 Trade Unionists, mostly from such higher grades as guards and engine-drivers. The

large class of tramway and omnibus workers have, after a brief rally, reverted to a state of disorganisation. The great army of warehousemen, porters, and other kinds of city labourers counts only a few hundred Trade Unionists in all the kingdom.

The Trade Union world is, therefore, in the main, composed of skilled craftsmen working in densely populated districts, where industry is conducted on a large scale. About 750,000 of its members—one-half of the whole—belong to the three staple trades of coalmining, cotton manufacture, and engineering, whilst the labourers and the women workers remain, on the whole, non-Unionists.

But the influence of Trade Unionism on working-class life cannot be measured by the numbers actually contributing to the Union funds at any one time. Among the non-Unionists in the skilled trades a large proportion have at one time or another belonged to their societies. Though they have let their membership lapse for one reason or another, they follow the lead of the Union, and are mostly ready, on the slightest encouragement from its members, or improvement in their own position, to rejoin an organisation to which in spirit they still belong. In the Labour Unions the instability of employment and the constant shifting of residence cause the organisation to resemble a sieve, through which a perpetual stream of members is flowing, a small proportion only remaining attached for any length of time. These lapsed members constitute in some sense a volunteer force of Trade Unionism ready to fight side by side with their old comrades, provided that means can be found for their support. Moreover, the Trade Unionists not only belong to the most highly-skilled and best-paid industries, but they include, as a general rule, the picked men in each trade. The moral and intellectual influence which they exercise on the rest of their class is, therefore, out of all proportion to their numbers. In their ranks are found, in almost every industrial centre, all the prominent leaders

of working-class opinion. They supply the directors of the co-operative stores, the administrators of clubs and friendly societies, and the working-class representatives on School Boards and Town Councils. Finally we may observe that the small but rapidly increasing class of working-men politicians invariably consists of men who are members of a trade society. We may safely assert that no one but a staunch Trade Unionist would have any chance of being returned as a working-class member to the House of Commons, or elected to a local governing body.

It is therefore impossible by a statistical survey to give any adequate idea of the Trade Union world. We may note the fact that the thousand separate unions or branches between Blyth and Middlesborough number some 200,000 members. We may ascertain that within fifteen miles of the Manchester Exchange at least as many Trade Unionists live and work. But no figures can convey any real impression of the place which the Trade Union fills in the every-day life of the skilled artisans of the United Kingdom. We are therefore fortunate in being able to supplement our statistics by a graphic description of Trade Union life supplied to us by a skilled craftsman, who joined his Union on the expiration of his apprenticeship, and served for some time in various official capacities.

To an apprentice, Trade Unionism is little more than a name. He may occasionally overhear the men in his shop discussing their Union and its work; and he knows that after "club night" a number of stories of the incidents of the meeting will be related; whilst, if he works in a strong Society shop, he may even hear heated discussions on resolutions submitted to the meeting. But the chief topic will always be the personal one—who was at the meeting, and what old chums were met; for the "club" is generally the recognised meeting-place for "old cronies" in the trade. If he works in a shop where any of the Trade Union officials are also employed he may sometimes receive a word of advice and exhortation "to be sure to join the Society when he is a man." On the whole, however, his knowledge of,

and interest in, the Society will be very slight. But should a strike occur at his shop whilst he is yet a lad, the presence and power of the Trade Union will be brought very vividly home to him; and as he works by himself or with the other lads in an otherwise deserted shop he will form some opinions of his own. He will naturally feel a violent antipathy to the "Blacks" brought into his shop, for the sense of comradeship is strong among boys; and he will notice with considerable pleasure that they are usually inferior workmen. But in spite of this, if the employer is "a good sort," who treats him well and kindly, he will probably still think that the men are wrong to strike. For the boy regards the employer as the one "who finds work for the men to do," and hence looks upon a strike as an act of ingratitude; and further, he has also a vague idea that the men are in the position of being many to one, and hence he promptly sides with the weaker party.

As the youth draws near the end of his apprenticeship he finds that he is frequently spoken to by Union men and urged to join the Society. He notices, too, that more attention is paid to him, and that his opinions are frequently asked upon trade matters. Finally he is invited round to the little public in which the club meetings are held, and introduced to the Lodge officials, and to a number of his fellow-tradesmen. The advantages offered by the Society are freely dilated upon, great stress being laid upon the friendly benefits—the sick, superannuation, funeral, and, above all, the out-of-work pay. For the Trade Society is the only institution which provides an out-of-work benefit. Against sickness and death he may already be insured in one or other of the numerous Friendly Societies; but the out-of-work pay is never provided except by a Trade Society, since only there is it possible to know whether a claimant is out of work by reason of bad trade, or bad character, or inefficiency, or even if he is really out of work at all. And as the advantages of this provision are pointed out to him he recollects the time when his father, a staid, steady-going mechanic, was thrown out of work by slack times; and the memory of that bitter experience clings very closely to him. Perhaps he is also in love. The thought of seeing "her" miserable and their children hungry whilst he himself is helpless to assist, must always be one of the most harrowing things to a careful young artisan, with visions of a happy little home in the near future. There is, however, another view of the club which appeals with almost equal force to our young artisan just out of his apprenticeship and finding himself in possession of an income nearly double that to which he has been accustomed.

The Trade Union Meeting House is the recognised club for the men in the craft, and thus presents many social attractions. Friendships are made—numerous "sing-songs" and smoking concerts arranged; and the joke and friendly glass, the good cheer and the conviviality, all present great attractions to the young workman.

The club is also a centre for obtaining the latest trade news. Here come the unemployed from other towns; here are to be heard reports of reductions or advance of wages, increased or diminished working hours, stories of tyranny, or the first rumours of that bug-bear to the men—the invention of new machines, with its probable displacement of their labour; or even worse, the introduction of women and boys at reduced prices. There is also an occasional visit from an important official of the central office to look forward to, and his words to digest afterwards. All these attractions incline the young artisan to enrol himself in the Lodge, but it is mainly personal considerations which in the end decide him to take the step. Are the good men in his trade —those whom he likes, who have treated him well, helped him out of his difficulties and given him coppers when a lad; the powerful men, the foremen, and those whose words carry most weight with their fellows—are these men members of the Union? If they are, and if, as is most probable in a Society shop, he has formed friendships with other young fellows who are already members, it is not long before he consents, and allows himself to be duly proposed as a candidate for membership.

The next club night sees him at the door of the club-room waiting anxiously, and perhaps timorously, whilst the formalities go on inside. Usually the ordinary business of the evening is all disposed of before the election of new members takes place. At the first mention by the President of the fact that a candidate is waiting to be elected, the doorkeeper (hitherto posted inside the door to see that no one comes in or goes out surreptitiously, and that none of the "worthy brothers" are in an unfit state to enter the room) slips rapidly outside, and holding the door firmly, refuses admission to any one while the ceremony lasts. The President then rising, calls for order, and having read out the name of the candidate and those of his proposer and seconder, asks those members to tell the Lodge what they know about him. Then the proposer rises, and addressing "Mr. President and worthy brothers," states what he knows—that the candidate is a young man, apprenticed in his shop and duly served his time—a good workman and a steady young fellow—anxious to join the Society and sure to be a credit to the Lodge. He resumes his

seat amid applause; and the seconder rises and repeats the same eulogy. Then the candidate is called into the room, the door-keeper admitting him with some ceremony. He enters in fear and trembling; for the formality of admission, though shorn of its former mysterious rites, is still conducted with sufficient solemnity to make it loom as something rather terrible. At once he finds himself the object of the friendly curiosity of the members, and the cause of applause, all of which adds considerably to his nervousness and trepidation. But he is agreeably surprised to find the ceremony a very meagre one. The President, rising, calls upon all the members to do likewise, and then, all standing, he reads out an initiatory address, and a portion of the Rules of the Society. Then in a simple affirmation the candidate pledges himself to abide by the Rules, to study the interests of the Society, and neither to do, nor, if he can prevent it, allow to be done, anything in opposition thereto. He has then to formally sign this pledge. That being done, his name is entered as a member, and upon paying his entrance fee, he is presented with a card of membership and a book of Rules of the Society.

He is now an ordinary member of the Lodge, and this newly acquired dignity is fully brought home to him in the course of a week or so, when he receives his first summons to attend a Lodge meeting. He wends his way to the little public-house in the dirty back street where the Lodge is held, and arriving shortly before eight o'clock, the time fixed for the opening of business, finds a number of his fellow-workmen congregated round the bar discussing the evening's programme and trade matters generally. The men come in by twos and threes, and he notices that, with few exceptions, all are neat and clean, having been home and had their tea and a wash in the interval between then and working hours.[1] The officers of the Lodge arriving, are greeted with a general recognition as they pass upstairs to prepare the club-room for the business of the evening. Shortly after the hour fixed for commencing, the President takes the chair, and, as the men slowly straggle up into the room, rises and declares the meeting open for business. The club-room is a long, low-ceilinged room which constitutes the first floor of the public-house. Down the centre of the room runs a trestle table with forms along the sides, on which the members are seating themselves. At the top a

[1] Old members often recall the days when the men used to come to the club straight from work, and "in their dirt." They frequently ascribe the orderly behaviour at club meetings at the present time, as compared with the rowdiness of the past, largely to this change of habit, itself a direct result of the reduction of the hours of labour.

shorter table is placed crosswise, forming a letter T, and here sits the group of officers. The room is decorated with the framed "emblems" of various trade societies, interspersed with gilt mirrors and advertising almanacs. At one end is a throne and canopy, showing that it is used also as a club-room by one or other of the friendly societies which still maintain the curious old rites of their orders. In a corner stands a cottage pianoforte, indicating that the room is also used for concerts, sing-songs, and convivial gatherings.

The first business of the evening is the payment of contributions. The Secretary, aided by the "Check Secretary," the Money Steward, and Treasurer, receives the subscriptions from the men as they come, one by one, up the room, enters the payment in the books, and signs the members' cards. In many cases women and children come to pay the subscriptions of their husbands or fathers; and he will feel a sense of shame at the idea of these having to come through the public bar to perform their errand. When the subscriptions are all received, the unemployed members, and the wives or other relatives of those who are sick, present themselves to draw their respective benefits. General inquiries are made after the health and hopes are expressed for the speedy recovery of the sick ones; and the sums due are paid out by the officials with considerable formality. During these proceedings there has been a constant hum of conversation in the room, and a continual running in and out of members to the bar, and back again. But all this now comes to an end. The President rises and calls for order. Strangers and non-members are cleared out of the room. The doorkeeper takes up his position inside the door to watch the comers-in and goers-out; and the drink-stewards make ready to attend to the members' wants, and act as waiters, in order to dispense with strangers in the room, and to prevent any unnecessary bustle and confusion.[1] The business of the evening opens with the reading of the minutes of the last meeting. Questions concerning the enforcement of some resolution, or the result of some instructions given to the officers, are asked and answered, and the minutes are confirmed by a show of hands and signed by the President. Then letters received, and copies of those despatched by the Secretary since the last meeting are read. These include letters from the General Office interpreting some rule as to the payment of benefits, from the District Committee giving notice of a trade regulation, and from other branch secretaries asking for particulars as to the character and ability of some candidate for admission.

[1] Many Unions forbid all drinking during the branch meeting.

Then follows the excitement of the evening—the report of delegates appointed to interview an employer on some grievance. They will explain how they waited on Mr. So-and-so, who at first refused to see them, and ordered them off his premises; how presently he came round and listened to their complaints; how he denied the existence of the alleged evil, and demanded the names of the men who complained, which the delegates of course refused to give; and how at last, after much dispute, he temporised, and gave them to understand that the grievance would be remedied. Then the members present from the shop in question are called upon to explain what improvements, if any, have been made in the matters of which they complained. If their report is satisfactory, the subject is allowed to drop. If not, there is a heated discussion. Our friend, seated with the young fellows at the back of the room, finds himself clamouring for a strike. The officers do their best to hold the meeting back. They suggest that the District Committee [1] ought first to be communicated with; or if the grievance is one against which the General Rules or District Bye-laws permit the men to strike without superior sanction, they urge further negotiations with the employer. The discussion is eventually closed by an order to the Secretary to write to the District Committee for advice, or by an instruction to the delegates to again interview the offending employer, and if he "bamboozles" them a second time, to strike the shop.

This excitement over, the interest of the meeting flags, and members drop out one by one. Perhaps there is an appeal by a member to whom the Committee has refused some benefit to which he thinks himself entitled. Against this decision he appeals to his fellow-members in Lodge assembled, urging his long membership, his wife and family, and his work for the Union as reasons why he should be leniently dealt with. Eloquent speeches are made on his behalf by personal friends. But the Committee and the officers declare that they have acted according to the Rules, and remind the Lodge that if they are ordered to pay an illegal benefit, the Central Office will disallow the amount, and order the members to repay it to the Union funds. With a strong Committee the vote will be against the man; with a weak one, and especially if the man is a jovial and "free-and-easy" comrade, his friends will turn up in sufficient numbers to carry the appeal. It being now ten o'clock, all other

[1] In the great Amalgamated Societies District Committees, composed of representatives of local branches, are formed in the great Industrial Centres, and decide on the trade policy to be adopted by their constituent branches. These decisions must be confirmed by the Central Executive.

business—such as resolutions proposed by individual members—gets adjourned to the next club night, and the President declares the Lodge duly closed. The Secretary hastens home, to sit up burning midnight oil in balancing the books, entering the minutes, making reports to the Central Executive or District Committee, and writing the letters ordered by the meeting.

The Lodge meeting soon plays an important part in the life of our active-minded artisan. He feels that he is taking part in the actual government of a national institution. Special meetings are held to discuss and vote on questions submitted by the Executive to the whole body of the members, such as the alteration of a rule, the election of some central official, or a grant in aid of another trade. But primarily the Lodge is his Court of Appeal against all industrial tyranny, a court in which he is certain of a ready and sympathetic hearing. There he takes complaints of fines and deductions, of arbitrary foremen, of low piecework prices—of anything, in short, which affects his interest or comfort as a wage-earner.

The tendency of this ever-present power and actuality of the Lodge and its officials is to overshadow in the mind of the member the larger functions and responsibilities of the Central Executive. To him they are something far away in the vast outside world, and their powers are very vague and shadowy. They are, however, brought home to him in some of the incidents of his Trade Union and working life. There is, for instance, the "emblem" of his Society, a large and generally highly-coloured representation of the various processes of the trade in which he is engaged, often excellently designed and executed. This, purchased for a few shillings soon after his admission to the Society, or more probably at the time of his marriage, is hung, gaily framed, in his front parlour. On it is recorded his name, age, and date of admission to the Society, and it bears the signatures, and perhaps the portraits, of the general officers. To him it is some slight connecting link with the other men in his trade and Society. To his wife it is the charter of their rights in case of sickness, want of work, or death. As such it is an object of pride in the household, pointed out with due impressiveness to friends and casual visitors.

But more important is the Monthly Circular, now a recognised feature in most of the large Unions. Here the member feels himself brought into direct contact with the outside world of his trade. Has he been ill or out of work and drawn relief, his name and the amount of money drawn are duly recorded. If he has not himself been so unfortunate, he here learns the names of

those who have, and perhaps hears from this source for the first time of such a calamity having befallen some friend in another and distant town. Here also are reports of the state of trade and the number of unemployed in every place where a branch of the Society exists; of alterations in hours and rates of wages effected during the month, by friendly negotiations or by a lock-out or a strike. Finally, there are letters from lodges or from individual members on all sorts of topics, including spicy abuse of the Central Executive, and tart rejoinders from the General Secretary. As his interest in the Society increases, our artisan himself writes letters to the Circular, explaining some grievance, suggesting a remedy for some grievance already explained, or answering criticisms upon the conduct and policy of his District Committee or his Lodge.

In addition to the Monthly Circular there is the Annual Report. This is a large volume of some hundreds of pages, containing, in a summarised form, the progress and doings of the Society for the whole year, with the total income and expenditure and the balance in hand, the proportionate cost of all the various benefits, a statement of the accounts of each branch, and many other figures of interest and importance. He feels a glow of pride as the growth of his Society in funds and members is recorded, and perhaps also a longing to see his own name printed as one of the officers of one of the Lodges, and thus be even distantly associated with the success of the Society.

But after a year or two of the comparative freedom of the journeyman's life he begins to feel strongly the desire for change and adventure. The five or seven years' apprenticeship through which he has just passed has kept him chained in one place, and a period of unrest now begins. Moreover, he has heard as a commonplace among his fellow-workmen, that no man knows his own ability or what he is worth until he has worked in more towns or shops than one. They have also expatiated to him upon the delights of "the road"; and finally he determines to take advantage of his membership of the Society to go on tramp on the first opportunity. He is therefore not altogether displeased when some temporary contraction in his trade causes his employer to turn him adrift, and thus gives him a right to draw his travelling card.[1]

[1] The travelling card, formerly called a "blank," is now, in most cases, a small book of receipt forms. On it is recorded the particulars of his membership, and the date to which he has paid his contributions. Along with it he receives a complete list of the public-houses which serve as the Society's Lodge-houses, and also a list of the names and addresses of the Lodge secretaries.

At the close of his first day's tramp, footsore and weary, he seeks the public-house at which the local Lodge is held, and having refreshed himself, starts off to find the Secretary. To him he presents his tramp card. When, on examination, the dates upon it are found to be correct, and the distance traversed is sufficient to entitle the traveller to the full benefit of sixpence and a bed, the Secretary writes an order to the publican to provide this relief. The date and place are then clearly marked on the travelling card, and the Secretary retains the corresponding half of the receipt form to serve as his own voucher for the expenditure. Should he know of any suitable situation vacant in the town, he will tell the tramp to repair there in the morning. But if no such post offers itself, the wayfarer must start off again in the morning, in time to arrive before night at the next Lodge town, at which alone he can receive any further relief.

If our friend takes to the road during the summer months and finds a situation within a few weeks, he will have had nothing worse than a pleasant holiday excursion. But if his tramp falls during the winter, or if he has to remain for months on the move, he will be in a pitiable plight. Whilst he is in the thickly-populated industrial districts, where "relief towns" in his trade are frequently to be met with, he finds his supper and bed at the end of every fifteen or twenty miles. But as he one by one exhausts these towns, he will, by the rule forbidding relief from the same Lodge at less than three months' interval, be compelled to go further afield. He presently finds the Lodges so far apart that it is impossible for a man to walk from one to another in a day. The relief afforded becomes inadequate for his maintenance, and many are the shifts to which he has to resort for food and shelter. Finally, after a specified period, usually three months, his card "runs out"; he has become "box-fast," and can draw no more from the Society until he has found a job, and resumed payment of his contributions.

But our artisan, being an able-bodied young craftsman, has found a job. Settled in a new town, his tramping for the present at an end, and himself recovered from the evils, moral and physical, which that brief period has wrought upon him, his interest in his Society revives. He attends his new Lodge regularly, at first because it is the only place in the town where he meets friends. Presently his old desire to figure as an official of the Society returns to him. He cultivates the acquaintance of the officers of the Lodge, mixes freely with the members, and takes every occasion to speak on exciting questions. At the next election he is appointed to some minor post, such as auditor

or steward. He makes himself useful and popular, and in the course of the year finds himself a member of the Lodge Committee.

From membership of the Branch Committee he succeeds to the position of Branch Secretary, the highest to which his fellow-tradesmen in his own town can elect him. On the night of the election he is somewhat surprised to find that there is no keen competition for the post. The pay of a Branch Secretary is meagre enough—from ten to fifty shillings per quarter. Most of his evenings and part of his Sundays are taken up with responsible clerical work. Besides attending the fortnightly or weekly committee meeting, lasting from eight to eleven or twelve at night, he has to prepare the agenda for the special and general meetings of the members, conduct the whole correspondence of the Lodge, draw up reports for the District Committee and Central Executive, keep the accounts, and prepare elaborate balance-sheets for the head office. Even his working day is not free from official duties. At any moment he may be called out of his shop to sign the card of a tramp, or he may have to hurry away in the dinner-hour to prevent members striking a shop without the sanction of the Lodge. When a deputation is appointed to wait on an employer, he must ask for a day off, and act as leading spokesman for the men. All this involves constant danger of dismissal from his work, or even boycott by the employers, as an "agitator." Nor will he always be thanked for his pains. Before he was elected to the Secretaryship, he was probably "hail, fellow, well met" with all the other members. Now he has constantly to thwart the wishes and interests of individual members. He must be always advising the Committee to refuse benefits to members whose cases fall outside the Rules of the Society, and counselling Lodge meetings to refuse to sanction strikes. Hence he soon finds little cliques formed among the malcontents, who bitterly oppose him. He is charged with injustice, pusillanimity, treachery, and finally with being a "master's man." But after a while, if he holds steadfastly on his course, and abides strictly to the Rules of the Society, he finds himself backed up by the Executive Committee, and gaining the confidence of the shrewd and sensible workmen who constitute the bulk of the members, and who can always be called up to support the officers in Lodge meetings.

One of the duties or privileges thrust on our Secretary is that of representing his trade on the local Trades Council. He is not altogether gratified to find that the Branch has elected, as his co-delegates, some of the more talkative and less level-headed of its

members. Some older and more experienced men decline to serve, on the ground that they have no time, and "have seen enough of that sort of thing." Nevertheless our Secretary at the outset takes his position very seriously. To the young Trade Unionist the Trades Council represents the larger world of labour politics, and he has visions of working for the election of labour men on the local governing bodies, and of being himself run by the Trades Council for the School Board, or the Town Council, or perhaps even for Parliament itself. When the monthly meeting of the Council comes round, he therefore makes a point of arriving punctually at eight o'clock at the Council Chamber. He finds himself in the large and gaudily decorated assembly room, over the bar of one of the principal public-houses of the town. A low platform is erected at one end, with chairs and a small table for the Chairman and Secretary. Below the platform is placed a long table at which are seated the reporters of the local newspapers, and the rest of the room is filled with chairs and improvised benches for the delegates. Here he meets the thirty or sixty delegates of the other Unions. He notices with regret that the salaried officials of the Societies which have their head-quarters in the town, and the District delegates of the great national Unions who are located in the neighbourhood—the very men he hoped to meet in this local "Parliament of Labour"—are conspicuous by their absence. The bulk of the delegates are either branch officials like himself, or representatives of the rank and file of Trade Unionism like his colleagues. The meeting opens quietly with much reading of minutes and correspondence by the Secretary. Then come the trade reports, delegate after delegate rising to protest against some encroachment by an employer, or to report the result of some negotiations for the removal of a grievance. A few questions may perhaps be asked by the other delegates, but there is usually no attempt to go into the merits of the case, the Council contenting itself with giving a sympathetic hearing, and applauding any general denunciation of industrial tyranny. If a strike is in progress, the delegates of the trade concerned ask for "credentials" (a letter by the Secretary of the Council commending the strikers to the assistance of other trades), and even appeal for financial assistance from the Council itself. This brings about difference of opinion. The whole Council has applauded the strike, but when it comes to the question of a levy, the representatives of such old-established Unions as the Compositors, Engineers, Masons, and Bricklayers get up and explain that the Rules of their Societies do not allow them to pledge themselves. On the other hand, the enthusiastic

delegates from a newly-formed Labour Union promptly promise the assistance of their Society, and vehemently accuse the Council of apathy. Then follows a still more serious business—a complaint by one of the several Unions in the engineering or building trades that the members of a rival Union have lately "blacklegged" their dispute. The delegates from the aggrieved Society excitedly explain how their men had been withdrawn from a certain firm which refused to pay the Standard Rate, and how, almost immediately afterwards, the members of the other Society had accepted the employer's terms and got the work. Then the delegates from the accused Society with equal warmth assert that the work in question belonged properly to their branch of the trade; that the members of the other Society had no business to be doing it at all; and that as the employers offered the rates specified in their working rules, they were justified in accepting the job. At once an angry debate ensues, in which personal charges and technical details are bandied from side to side, to the utter bewilderment of the rest of the members. In vain the Chairman intervenes, and appeals for order. At last the Council, tired of the wrangle, rids itself of the question by referring it to a Committee, and an old member of the Council whispers to our friend a fervent hope that the Committee will shirk its job, and never meet, since its report would please neither party, and probably lead to the retirement of one, if not both, trades from the Council.

The next business brings the Council back to harmony. The delegates appointed at the last meeting to urge on the Town Council or the School Board the adoption of a "fair wage clause" now give in their report. They describe how Mr. Alderman Jones, a local politician of the old school, talked about wanton extravagance and the woes of the poor ratepayer; and the Council will be moved to laughter at their rejoinder, "How about the recent increase in the salary of your friend, the Town Clerk?" They repeat, with pleasure, the arguments they used on the deputation, and their final shot, a bold statement as to the number of Trade Unionists on the electoral register, is received with general applause. But in spite of all this they report that Alderman Jones has prevailed, and the Town Council has rejected the clause. Our new member notes with satisfaction that the Council is not so ineffective a body as he has been fearing. After a good deal of excited talk the Secretary is instructed to write to the local newspapers explaining the position, and calling attention to the example set by other leading municipalities. The members, new and old alike, undertake to heckle the retiring Town Coun-

cillors who voted against the interests of labour; and the best men of the Council, to whichever political party they belong, join in voting for a Committee to run Trade Union candidates against their most obdurate opponents.

Passing, rejecting, or adjourning resolutions, of which notice has been given at a previous meeting, takes up the remainder of the evening. First come propositions submitted on behalf of the Executive Committee, composed of five or seven of the leading men in the Council. The Secretary explains that an influential member of the Trade Union Congress Parliamentary Committee has intimated that if they want a certain measure passed into law, they had better carry a particular resolution, which is thereupon read to the meeting. It is briefly discussed, carried unanimously, and handed to the reporters, the Secretary being ordered to send copies to the local M.P.s and possibly to the Cabinet Minister concerned. Resolutions by other members are not so easily disposed of. The delegate from the Tailors, a fanatical adherent of the Peace Society, proposes a strong condemnation of increased armaments, ending up with a plea for international arbitration. But the engineer and the shipwright vehemently object to the resolution as impracticable, and one of them moves an amendment calling on the Government to find employment for hardworking mechanics in times of industrial depression by building additional ironclads. The Socialist Secretary of a Labour Union submits a resolution calling on the Town Council to open municipal workshops for the unemployed—a project which is ridiculed by the Conservative compositor (who is acting also as one of the reporters). During the debate the Chairman, Secretary, and Executive Committeemen lie low and say nothing, allowing the discussion to wander away from the point. The debate drops, and if a vote on a popular but impracticable resolution becomes imminent, some "old Parliamentary hand" suggests its adjournment to a fuller meeting. For the first few evenings our friend finds all this instructive and interesting enough. Before the year is up he has realised that, except on such simple issues as the Fair Wages Clause, and the payment of Trade Union wages by the local authorities, the crowded meeting of tired workmen, unused to official business, with knowledge and interest strictly limited to a single industry, is useless as a Court of Appeal, and ineffective even as a joint committee of the local trades. At the best the Council becomes the instrument, or, so to speak, the sounding-board, of the experienced members, who are in touch with the Trade Union Parliamentary leaders, and who (at a pay of only a few shillings a quarter) conduct all the correspondence

and undertake all the business which the Trade Unions of the town have really in common.

But our friend receives a sudden check in his career. One pay-day he is told by his employer that he will not be wanted after next week. It may be that he has had some words with the foreman over a spoilt job, or that he has been making himself too prominent in Trade Union work, or simply that his employer's business is slack. But whatever the cause he is discharged, and must seek employment elsewhere. At once he declares himself on the funds of his Society, sending notice to the President and Treasurer of his position and signing the out-of-work book at the club daily, like any other unemployed member. For the next two or three weeks he tramps from shop to shop in his district seeking work, and eagerly scans the daily papers in hopes of finding an advertisement of some vacant situation. Then comes the news from a friend of a vacancy in a distant town. He resigns his position as Secretary of the Lodge, draws the balance of out-of-work pay due to him, and departs regretfully from the town where he has made so many friends to start upon a new situation.

On arriving at his new place he is surprised to find that there is no branch of his Society in the town. There are a few odd members, but not enough to support a branch—hence they send their contributions to the nearest Lodge town. As soon as he has settled down he takes steps to alter this. In his own workshop he argues and cajoles the men into a belief in Trade Unionism. At night he frequents their favourite haunts, and by dint of argument, promises and appeals, finally gets enough of them to agree to join a Lodge to make it worth while opening one in the town. He forthwith communicates with the Central Executive Committee, and they, knowing his previous work, appoint him Secretary *pro tem.* A meeting of all the trade is then called by handbills sent round to the shops, and posted in the men's favourite public-houses. On the eventful night the General Secretary and perhaps another Central officer, come down to the town. They bring a Branch box containing sets of Rules and cards of membership, a full set of cash and other books, a number of business papers, and even a bottle of ink—in fact all that is needful to carry on the business of a Lodge. The room will be crammed full of the men in the trade interested in hearing what the Society is and what it wants to do. Speeches are made, the advances of wages and reduction of hours gained by the Society are enumerated, the friendly benefits are explained, and instances are given of men disabled from working at their trade, receiving £100 accident benefit from the Society, and setting up

in a small business of their own. Then the General Secretary opens the Lodge, and entrance fees and contributions are paid by a large number of those present, and the meeting changed from a public to a private one. Officers are elected, our friend again finds himself chosen as Secretary, a friendly foreman accepts the post of Treasurer, while the other old members present at the meeting are elected to the remaining offices. Addresses from the Central officials start the Lodge on its way, and the meeting breaks up at a late hour with cheers for the Society and the General Secretary.

Within the next three months the Branch Secretary finds that all that glitters is not gold. At least half of those who joined at the beginning have lapsed, and at times the branch looks like collapsing altogether. But by dint of much hard work, persuasion, and perhaps the formation of friendships, it is kept together until a time of prosperity for the trade arrives. This is the Secretary's opportunity to make or break his Lodge, and being a wise man he takes it. He puts a resolution on the agenda paper for the next Lodge meeting in favour of an advance of wages, or a reduction of hours, or both. The next meeting carries it unanimously, and it at once becomes the talk of the whole trade in the town. Men flock down and join the club in order to assist and participate in the proposed improvements. Then the Secretary appeals to the General Executive for permission to ask for the advance. They consider the matter seriously, and want to know what proportion of the men in the town are members, and how long they have been so; what is the feeling of the non-Unionists towards the proposed movement, and whether there is any local fund to support non-Unionists who come out, or buy off tramps and strangers who come to the town during the probable strike. All these questions being more or less satisfactorily answered, permission to seek the improvement is at length given, and now comes the Secretary's first taste of "powder" in an official capacity.

During this agitation the number of members in the Lodge has been steadily increasing, until it comes to include a good proportion of the trade in the town. The non-Unionists have also been approached as to their willingness to assist the movement, and the bulk of them readily agree to come out with the Society men if these undertake to maintain them. A special Committee is formed to conduct the "Advance Movement," including delegates from the non-Society shops prepared to strike. A local levy is put on the members of the Lodge, in order to form a fund from which to pay such strike expenses as may not be charged to

the Union. At length all is ready, and our Secretary is instructed to serve notices upon all the employers in the town, asking for the advance in wages or the reduction of hours claimed by the men.

Meanwhile the employers have not been idle. They have heard rumours of the coming storm and have met together and consulted as to what should be done, and have formed a more or less temporary association to meet the attack. Upon receiving the notices from the men's Secretary they invite a deputation of the men to wait upon them and discuss the matter. To this the men of course agree, and on the appointed night the Secretary and the "Advance Committee" appear at the joint meeting. The leading employer having been elected to the chair, asks the men to open their case for an advance of wages and reduction of hours. This they do, emphasising the facts that wages are lower and hours longer here than in the same trade in neighbouring towns; that the cost of living is increasing; and that some men are always unemployed who would be absorbed by the proposed change. The employers retort by urging the smallness of their profits and the difficulty of securing orders in competition with other towns where wages are even less than they are here; and also by urging that the cost of living is decreasing and not increasing—an assertion which they support by statements of the price of various articles at different times compared with the present. The men's Secretary has as much as he can do to keep his men in order. The new members—the "raw heads" of the Committee—are almost hoping that the employers will not agree, for to them a strike means merely a few weeks' "play," at the expense of the Union. And the ordinary workman is so little used to discussing with his adversaries that any statement of the other side of the case is apt to arouse temper. The employers, too, unaccustomed to treating with their men, and still feeling it somewhat derogatory to do so, are not inclined to mince matters, or smooth over difficulties. Hence the meeting becomes noisy; discussion turns into recrimination; and the conference breaks up in confusion.

Meanwhile the Central Executive has watched with anxiety the approach of a dispute which will involve the Union in expense, and end possibly in defeat. The General Secretary, accompanied by one of the Executive Council, appears on the scene, and endeavours to mediate. But as the town has been a non-Union one, the employers refuse to see any but their own workmen, and thus lose the chance of the very moderate compromise which the General Secretary is almost sure to offer. This slight to their

Official naturally incenses the local Unionists, and on the following Saturday, when their notices have expired, they "pick up" their tools as they leave the works and the strike is begun.

Then follows a period of intense excitement and hard work for the men's officials. The employers advertise in all directions for men at "good wages" to take "steady employment," and counter advertisements are inserted giving notice of the strike. All the streets are closely picketed by men, who take it in turns to do duty in twos and threes outside a factory or workshop for so many hours each day; pickets are sent to meet all trains, and by dint of promises, bribes, and appeals to their "manliness and brotherhood," workmen who have been attracted to the town by the employers' advertisements are induced to depart. Perhaps a few "blacks" may escape their vigilance and get into some shop. Every time they come out they are followed and urged to abandon their dirty calling and join their fellows in the good work. Some give way, and their fares are at once paid to the place whence they came. Subscription boxes and sheets are sent out to raise the funds necessary for the extra expenses, which must not be taken from the Society's funds. If the strike drags on for many weeks delegates go from town to town addressing meetings of Trade Unions and Trades Councils soliciting aid, and usually succeed in getting a good deal more than their own expenses, the surplus being remitted to the Lodge. There are the non-Unionists who have come out on strike to be supported; "blacks" to bribe and send away; printing and delivering of bills and placards to be paid for, and numerous other subsidiary expenses to be met, all of which must be defrayed from the local fund.

But even the most protracted strike comes to an end. If trade is good and the men are well organised, the employers will not have succeeded in getting any good workmen, and not even sufficient bad ones, to continue their works, and their plant and reputation are alike suffering from unskilled workmanship. So one by one they give in, and accept the men's terms, until at length the men are again at work. On the other hand, if business be slack the strike may end in another way. One by one the employers obtain enough men of one sort or another to carry out what orders they have in hand. As week succeeds week the strikers lose heart, until at last the weak ones suddenly return to work at the old terms. The officers and committeemen and a few dogged fighters may remain out, hoping against hope that something will turn up to make the employers give in. But the Central Executive will probably object to the continued drain of strike-pay, and may presently declare the strike closed. This

will cause some little resentment among the local stalwarts, but the strike-pay being now at an end, those who are still unemployed must tramp off to another town in search of work.

If the strike results thus in failure the newly formed Lodge will soon disappear and the men in the trade remain unorganised until the advent of another leader of energy and ability. But if it has resulted in victory the prosperity of the Lodge is assured. The workmen in the trade flock to the support of an institution which has shown such practically beneficial results. Meanwhile the Secretary, to whom most of the credit is due, begins to be known throughout the trade, and spoken of as the man who changed such and such a place from a non-Union to a Union town. Short eulogistic notices of his career appear in the Monthly Circular, and thus the way is paved for his future advancement.

Having thus succeeded in organising his own trade, he finds an outlet for his energies in doing the same for others in his town. Perhaps there are other branches of his own industry without organisations, and if so he begins among them exactly the same work as he pursued among his own members. When the time is ripe a meeting is called and a branch of the society, which embraces the particular body of men, opened, and he accepts the post of President to help it along until its members have gained some experience. Then he will begin again with other trades and go through the same process, and thus in the course of time succeed in turning a very bad Trade Union town into a very good one. When that is accomplished he determines to start a Trades Council. He attends meetings of all the Unions and branches in the town and explains the objects and urges the importance of such a body. He writes letters to the local Press, and agitates among his own personal following until his object is well advertised. Finally a joint meeting of delegates from the majority of the local societies and branches is got together. The Rules of a neighbouring Trades Council are discussed and adopted, and at length a Trades Council is definitely established, if only by the two or three branches which he has himself organised. He is of course appointed its Secretary, and gradually by hard work, and perhaps by successfully agitating for some concession to labour by the Town Council or local School Board, he wins the approval of all the societies, and the Council then becomes a thoroughly representative body. As Secretary of a newly established Trades Council he becomes rapidly well known. He is in constant request as a speaker in both his own and neighbouring towns; and he is sent to the Trade Union Congress and instructed to move some resolution of his own drafting. But as the work gradually increases,

our friend, who has all the time to be earning a livelihood at his trade, finds that he must choose between the Trades Council and his own Lodge. Through the Trades Council he can become an influential local politician, and may one day find himself the successful "Labour Candidate" for the School Board or the Town Council. But this activity on behalf of labour generally draws him ever further away from the routine duties of Branch Secretary of a National Society, and he will hardly fail to displease some of the members of his own trade. He may therefore prefer to resign his Secretaryship of the Trades Council, take a back seat in politics, and spend all his leisure in the work of his own Society, with the honourable ambition of eventually becoming one of its salaried officers. In this case he not only conducts the business of his Lodge with regularity, but also serves on the District Committee. Presently, as the most methodical of its members, he will be chosen to act as its Secretary, and thus be brought into close communication with the Central Executive, and with other branches and districts.

All this constitutes what we may call the non-commissioned officer's service in the Trade Union world, carried out in the leisure, and paid for by the hour, snatched from a week's work at the bench or the forge. But now the fame of our Secretary and his steady work for the Society have spread throughout the district, and when it is decided to appoint a District Delegate with a salary of £2 or £2 10s. per week, many branches request him to run for the post. His personal friends and supporters among them raise an election fund for him, and for a few weeks he dashes about his district and attends all the branch meetings to urge his candidature upon the members. Finally the votes are taken in the Lodges by ballot and sent to the general office to be counted, and he finds himself duly elected to the post. Again he moves his home, this time to some central town, so that he can visit any part of his district with ease and rapidity. His district stretches over three or four counties, and includes many large industrial centres, and he finds himself fully occupied. Let us see how he spends his days, and what is the work he will do for his Society.

Every morning he receives a whole batch of letters on Society business. The General Secretary orders him immediately to visit one of the branches in his district and inspect the books, a report having reached the office of some irregularity. A Branch Secretary telegraphs for him to come over at once and settle a dispute which has broken out with an important firm. Another writes asking him to summon a mass meeting of the trade in the

district to take a vote for or against a general strike against some real or fancied grievance. The Secretary of the Employers' Association in another town fixes an appointment with him to discuss the piecework prices for a new sort of work. Finally the Secretary of his District Committee instructs him to attend a joint meeting which they have arranged with the District Committee of another Union to settle a difficult question of overlap or apportionment of work between the members of the two societies.

Our friend spends the first half an hour at his correspondence, fixes a day for a special audit of the accounts of the suspected branch, drops a hasty line to the General Secretary informing him of his whereabouts for the next few days, and writes to the Branch Secretary strongly objecting to the proposed mass meeting to vote on a strike on the ground that "an aggregate meeting is an aggravated meeting," and appointing, instead, a day for a small conference of representatives from the different branches. Then he is off to the railway station so as to arrive promptly on the scene of the dispute just reported to him. Here he finds that a number of his members have peremptorily struck work and are hanging about the gates of the works. He will half persuade, half order them to instantly resume work, whilst he goes into the office to seek the employer. If it is a "Society shop" in a good Trade Union district he is heartily welcomed, and the matter is settled in a few minutes. The next train takes him to the neighbouring town, where he spends two or three hours with the Employers' Secretary, using all his wits to manipulate the new prices in such a way as at least to maintain, if not to increase, the weekly earnings of his members. In the evening he has to be back at the centre of his district, thrashing out, in the long and heated debate of a joint meeting, the difficult question of whose job the work in dispute between the two Unions properly is, and what constitutes a practical line of demarcation between the two trades. Thus he rushes about from day to day, finishing up at night with writing reports on the state of trade, organisation, and other matters to the Executive Committee sitting at the headquarters of his Union.

He has now been for many years the devoted servant of his fellow-workmen, re-elected at the end of each term to his post of District Delegate. Upon the removal by resignation or death of the General Secretary he is pressed on all sides to put up for the post. The members of the District Committee, and all the secretaries of the local branches, urge on him his fitness, and the advantages the district will derive from his election as General

Secretary. Again a committee of his friends and supporters raises a fund to enable him to travel over the whole country and visit and address all the branches of the Society. Meanwhile the Executive Committee prepares for the election of the new General Secretary. At the removal of the late head officer they at once meet to appoint one of their number to carry on the duties *pro tem.*, and to issue notices asking for nominations for the post (generally confined to members who have been in the Society a certain number of years and are not in arrears with their subscriptions). Printed lists of candidates are forthwith sent to the branches in sufficient numbers to be distributed to all the members. A ballot-box is placed in the club-room, the election standing over at least two meeting nights in order to allow every member full opportunity to record his vote. The boxes are then sent from the branches to the central office, where the members of the Executive Committee count the papers and declare the result.

Our District Delegate having been declared duly elected to the post of General Secretary is again compelled to remove. This time it is to one of the great cities—London, Manchester, or Newcastle—the headquarters of his Society. He is now entitled to a salary ranging from £200 to £300 per annum, and has attained the highest office to which it is in the power of his fellow-tradesmen to appoint him. We will there leave him to enjoy the dignity and influence of the position, to struggle through the laborious routine work of a central office, and to discover the new difficulties and temptations which beset the life of the general officer of a great Trade Union.

The foregoing narrative gives us, in minute detail, the inner life of Trade Union organisation. But this picture, on the face of it, represents the career of an officer, not a private soldier, in the Trade Union army. Nor must it be supposed that the great majority of the million and a half Trade Unionists render, even as privates, any active service in the Trade Union forces. Only in the crisis of some great dispute do we find the branch meetings crowded, or the votes at all commensurate with the total number of members. At other times the Trade Union appears to the bulk of its members either as a political organisation whose dictates they are ready to obey at Parliamentary and other elections, or as a mere benefit

club in the management of which they do not desire to take part. In the long intervals of peace during which the constitution of the Society is being slowly elaborated, the financial basis strengthened, the political and trade policy determined, less than a half or perhaps even a third of the members will actively participate in the administrative and legislative work. Practically the whole of this minority will, at one time or another, serve on branch committees or in such minor offices as steward, trustee, auditor or sick-visitor. These are the members who form the solid nucleus of the branch, always to be relied on to maintain the authority of the committee. From their ranks come the two principal branch officers, the President and the Secretary, upon whom the main burden of administration falls. Though never elected for more than one year, these officers frequently remain at their posts for many terms in succession ; and their offices are in any case filled from a narrow circle of the ablest or most experienced members.

Besides the active soldiers in the Trade Union ranks, to be counted by hundreds of thousands, we have therefore a smaller class of non-commissioned officers made up of the Secretaries and Presidents of local Unions, branches and district committees of national societies, and of Trades Councils. Of these we estimate that there are over 20,000 holding office at any one time. These men form the backbone of the Trade Union world, and constitute the vital element in working-class politics. Dependent for their livelihood on manual labour, they retain to the full the workman's sense of insecurity, privation, and thwarted aspirations. Their own singleness of purpose, the devotion with which they serve their fellows in laborious offices with only nominal remuneration, and their ingenuous faith in the indefinite improvement of human nature by education and better conditions of life, all combine to maintain their enthusiasm for every kind of social reform. Thus they are always open to new ideas, provided these are put forward in a practical shape,

by men whose character and intelligence they respect. This class of non-commissioned officers it is which has, in the main, proved the progressive element in the Trade Union world, and which actually determines the trend of working-class thought. Nevertheless these men are not the real administrators of Trade Union affairs except in the little local Unions, run by men working at their trade, which are fast disappearing. In the great national and county Unions the branch or lodge officials are strictly bound down by detailed rules, and are allowed practically no opportunity of acting on their own initiative. The actual government of the Trade Union world rests exclusively in the hands of a class apart, the salaried officers of the great societies.

This Civil Service of the Trade Union world, non-existent in 1850, numbers at the present time between six and seven hundred.[1] Alike in the modern organisation of industry, and in the machinery of Democratic politics, it takes every day a position of greater influence and importance. Yet if we may judge from the fact that we have not met with a single description of this new governing class, the character of its influence, and even its existence, have hitherto remained almost unobserved. To understand the part played by this Civil Service, both in the Trade Union Movement and in the modern industrial State, the reader must realise the qualities

[1] We have not included in this figure a large class of men who are indirectly paid officials of Trade Unions, such as the checkweighers among the coalminers, and the "collectors" among the cotton-weavers, cardroom-workers, &c. The checkweigher, as we have stated (p. 291), is elected and paid weekly wages, not by the members of the Trade Union, but by all the miners in a particular coalpit. But as Trade Unionism and the election of a checkweigher are practically coincident, he frequently serves as lodge secretary, &c. The collectors employed by certain Trade Unions to go from house to house and collect the members' contributions are remunerated by a percentage on their collections. Though not strictly salaried officials, they serve as Trade Union recruiting agents, as well as intermediaries between members and the central office, for complaints, appeals, and the circulation of information.

which the position demands, the temptations to which its holders are exposed, and the duties which they are called upon to perform.

The salaried official of a great Trade Union occupies a unique position. He belongs neither to the middle nor to the working class. The interests which he represents are exclusively those of the manual working class from which he has sprung, and his duties bring him into constant antagonism with the brain-working, property-owning class. On the other hand, his daily occupation is that of a brain-worker, and he is accordingly sharply marked off from the typical proletarian, dependent for his livelihood on physical toil.

The promotion of a working man to the position of a salaried brain-worker effects a complete and sudden change in his manner of life. Instead of working every day at a given task, he suddenly finds himself master of his own time, with duties which, though laborious enough, are indefinite, irregular, and easily neglected. The first requisite for his new post is therefore personal self-control. No greater misfortune can befall an energetic and public-spirited Trade Unionist, who on occasions takes a glass too much, than to become the salaried officer of his Union. So long as he is compelled, at least nine days out of every fourteen, to put in a hard day's manual work at regular hours, his propensity to drink may not prevent him from being an expert craftsman and an efficient citizen. Such a man, elected General Secretary or District Delegate, is doomed, almost inevitably, to become an habitual drunkard. Instead of being confined to the factory or the mine, he is now free to come and go at his own will, and drink is therefore accessible to him at all hours. His work involves constant travelling, and frequent waiting about in strange towns, with little choice of resort beyond the public-house. The regular periods of monotonous physical exertion are replaced by unaccustomed intellectual strain, irregular hours, and times of anxiety and excitement, during which he will be worried

and enticed to drink by nearly every one he meets. And in addition to this the habitual drunkenness of a Trade Union official, though it involves discredit, seldom brings dismissal from his post. No discovery is more astounding to the middle-class investigator than the good-natured tolerance with which a Trade Union will, year after year, re-elect officers who are well known to be hopeless drunkards. The rooted dislike which working men have to "do a man out of his job" is strengthened, in the case of a Trade Union official, by a generous recognition of the fact that his service of his fellows has unfitted him to return to manual labour. Moreover, the ordinary member of a Trade Union overlooks the vital importance of skilled and efficient administration. He imagines that the drunkenness and the consequent incompetency of his General Secretary means only some delay in the routine work of the office, or, at the worst, some small malversation of the Society's funds. So long as the cash keeps right, and the reports appear at regular intervals, it seems never to occur to him that it is for lack of headship that his Society is losing ground in all directions, and foregoing, in one week, more than a dishonest Secretary could steal in a year.

Fortunately the almost invariable practice of electing the salaried officials from the ranks of the non-commissioned officers tends to exclude the workman deficient in personal self-control. The evenings and holidays spent in clerical duties for the branch do not attract the free liver, whilst the long apprenticeship in inferior offices gives his fellow-workmen ample opportunity of knowing his habits. Thus we find that the salaried officials of the old-established Unions are usually decorous and even dignified in their personal habits. An increasing number of them are rigid teetotalers, whilst many others resolutely refuse, at the risk of personal unpopularity, all convivial drinking with their members.

But another danger—one which would not immediately have occurred to the middle-class investigator—besets the

workman who becomes a salaried official of his Union. The following extract, taken from the graphic narrative we have already quoted, explains how it appears to a thoughtful artisan :—

And now begins a change which may possibly wreck his whole Trade Union career. As Branch Secretary, working at his trade, our friend, though superior in energy and ability to the rank and file of his members, remained in close touch with their feelings and desires. His promotion to a salaried office brings him wider knowledge and larger ideas. To the ordinary Trade Unionist the claim of the workman is that of Justice. He believes, almost as a matter of principle, that in any dispute the capitalist is in the wrong and the workman in the right. But when, as a District Delegate, it becomes his business to be perpetually investigating the exact circumstances of the men's quarrels, negotiating with employers, and arranging compromises, he begins more and more to recognise that there is something to be urged on the other side There is also an unconscious bias at work. Whilst the points at issue no longer affect his own earnings or conditions of employment, any disputes between his members and their employers increase his work and add to his worry. The former vivid sense of the privations and subjection of the artisan's life gradually fades from his mind ; and he begins more and more to regard all complaints as perverse and unreasonable.

With this intellectual change may come a more invidious transformation. Nowadays the salaried officer of a great Union is courted and flattered by the middle class. He is asked to dine with them, and will admire their well-appointed houses, their fine carpets, the ease and luxury of their lives. Possibly, too, his wife begins to be dissatisfied. She will point out how So-and-so, who served his apprenticeship in the same shop, is now well-off, and steadily making a fortune ; and she reminds her husband that, had he worked half as hard for himself as he has for others, he also might now be rich, and living in comfort without fear of the morrow. He himself sees the truth of this. He knows many men who, with less ability and energy than himself, have, by steady pursuit of their own ends, become foremen, managers, or even small employers, whilst he is receiving only £2 or £4 a week without any chance of increase. And so the remarks of his wife and her relations, the workings of his own mind, the increase of years, a growing desire to be settled in life and to see the future clear before himself and his children, and perhaps also

a little envy of his middle-class friends, all begin insidiously, silently, unknown even to himself, to work a change in his views of life. He goes to live in a little villa in a lower middle-class suburb. The move leads to his dropping his workmen friends; and his wife changes her acquaintances. With the habits of his new neighbours he insensibly adopts more and more of their ideas. Gradually he finds himself at issue with his members, who no longer agree to his proposals with the old alacrity. All this comes about by degrees, neither party understanding the cause. He attributes the breach to the influence of a clique of malcontents, or perhaps to the wild views held by the younger generation. They think him proud and "stuck-up," over-cautious and even apathetic in trade affairs. His manner to his members, and particularly to the unemployed who call for donation, undergoes a change. He begins to look down upon them all as "common workmen"; but the unemployed he scorns as men who have made a failure of their lives; and his scorn is probably undisguised. This arouses hatred. As he walks to the office in his tall hat and good overcoat, with a smart umbrella, curses not loud but deep are muttered against him by members loitering in search of work, and as these get jobs in other towns they spread stories of his arrogance and haughtiness. So gradually he loses the sympathy and support of those upon whom his position depends. At last the climax comes. A great strike threatens to involve the Society in desperate war. Unconsciously biassed by distaste for the hard and unthankful work which a strike entails, he finds himself in small sympathy with the men's demands, and eventually arranges a compromise on terms distasteful to a large section of his members. The gathering storm-cloud now breaks. At his next appearance before a general meeting cries of "treachery" and "bribery" are raised. Alas! it is not bribery. Not his morality but his intellect is corrupted. Secure in the consciousness of freedom from outward taint, he faces the meeting boldly, throws the accusation back in their faces, and for the moment carries his point. But his position now becomes rapidly unbearable. On all sides he finds suspicion deepening into hatred. The members, it is true, re-elect him to his post; but they elect at the same time an Executive Committee pledged to oppose him in every way.[1] All this time he still fails to understand what has gone wrong, and probably

[1] We have here another instance of the deeply rooted objection on the part of workmen to "sack" their officials. A Society will make the life of an unpopular official unbearable, and will thwart him in every direction; but so long as he hangs on he has a safe berth.

attributes it to the intrigues of jealous opponents eager for his place. Harassed on all sides, distrusted and thwarted by his Executive Committee, at length he loses heart. He looks out for some opening of escape, and finally accepting a small appointment, lays down his Secretaryship with heartfelt relief and disappears for ever from the Trade Union world.

The Trade Union official who becomes too genteel for his post is, like the habitual drunkard, an exception. The average Secretary or District Delegate is too shrewd to get permanently out of touch with his constituents. Nevertheless the working man who becomes a salaried officer has to pick his way with considerable care between the dangers attendant on the *rôle* of boon companion, and those inseparable from the more reputable but more hated character of the superior person. To personal self-control he must add strength and independence of character, a real devotion to the class from which he has sprung, and a sturdy contempt for the luxury and "gentility" of those with whom he will be brought in contact.

Such is the personal character of the typical civil servant of the Trade Union Movement. But all Trade Union officials are not engaged in the same kind of work; and we find the differences in function resulting in marked varieties of type.

We have first the salaried officials of the skilled trades, numbering in all about four hundred. They are broadly distinguished from the officers of the Labour Unions by the fact that they are invariably men who have worked at the craft they represent, and who have usually served their Society as Branch Secretaries. We may distinguish among them two leading types—the administrator of friendly benefits and the Trade Official. To the former—the school of William Allan—belong most of the General and Assistant Secretaries of the great Trade Friendly Societies—organisations in which the mass of routine benefit business is so enormous that only the ablest officials succeed in rising above it. Of the other type, the Trade Official, the most conspicuous representatives are the

officials of the Cotton-spinners and the Coalminers, whose advent to the Trade Union world about 1872 we described in a previous chapter. Another section of Trade Officials is made up of the District Delegates of such Unions as the Boilermakers, Shipwrights, and (since 1892) the Amalgamated Engineers and the Amalgamated Carpenters, together with the "Investigators" of the National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives. The number of essentially Trade Officials of one kind or another is probably now equal to that of the Secretaries.

The General Secretary who is essentially an administrator of friendly benefits does not exercise any important influence on the Trade Union world. Rigidly confined to his office, he becomes, in most cases, a painstaking clerk, and rises, at the best, to the level of a shrewd manager of an insurance company. He passes his life in investigating the claims of his members to the various benefits, and in upholding, at all hazard of unpopularity, a sound financial system of adequate contributions and moderate benefits. Questions of trade policy interest him only so far as they tend to swell or diminish the number of his members in receipt of benefit. He is therefore apt to be more intent on getting unemployed members off the books, than in raising the standard rate of wages or decreasing the length of the normal day. For the same reason he proves a most tenacious champion of his members' rights in all disputes about overlap and apportionment of work; and it may happen that he finds himself more often engaged in disputes with rival Unions than with employers. He represents the most conservative element in Trade Union life. On all occasions he sits tight, and votes solid for what he conceives to be the official, or moderate, party.

Far more influential in Trade Union politics is the salaried officer of the other type. The Trade Official, as we have called him, is largely the result of the prevalence, in certain industries, of a complicated system of piecework remuneration. We have already described how the cotton

lists, on the one hand, and the checkweigh clause on the other, called into existence a specially trained class, which has since been augmented by the adoption of piecework lists in other industries. The officers of this type are professionals in the art of Collective Bargaining. They spend their lives in intricate calculations on technical details, and in conducting delicate negotiations with the employers or their professional agents. It matters little whether they are general secretaries of essentially trade societies, such as the federal Unions of Cotton-spinners and Cotton-weavers, or the exclusively trade delegates of societies with friendly benefits, such as the Boiler-makers and Engineers. In either case their attention is entirely devoted to the earnings of their members. Alert and openminded, they are keen observers of market prices, employers' profits, the course of international trade, and everything which may affect the gross product of their industry. They are stern critics of incompetency, whether in employer or employed. Eager advocates of improved processes, new machinery, and "speeding up," they would rather see an antiquated mill closed or an incompetent member discharged, than reduce the Standard Rate. Nor do they confine themselves exclusively to the money wages of their clients. Among them are to be found the best advocates of legislative regulation of the conditions of employment; and the rapid improvement and elaboration of the Labour Code during the past twenty years has been due, in the main, to their detailed knowledge and untiring pertinacity.

The Trade Official, however, has the defects of his qualities. The energetic workman, who, at about thirty years of age, leaves the factory, the forge, or the mine, to spend his days pitting his brains against those of shrewd employers and sharpwitted solicitors, has necessarily to concentrate all his energies upon the limited range of his new work. As a Branch Secretary, he may have taken a keen interest in the grievances and demands of other trades besides his own. Soon he finds his duties incompatible

with any such wide outlook. The feeling of class solidarity, so vivid in the manual working wage-earner, tends gradually to be replaced by a narrow trade interest. The District Delegate of the Boilermakers finds it as much as he can do to master the innumerable and constantly changing details of every variety of ironship, boiler, and bridge building in every yard, and even at every port. The Investigator of the National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives is often hard put to it to estimate accurately the labour in each of the thousand changing styles of boots, whilst at the same time keeping pace with ever-increasing complexity both of machinery and division of labour. The Cotton Official, with his bewildering lists, throws his whole mind into coping with the infinite variety of calculations involved in new patterns, increased speed, and every alteration of count and draw and warp and weft. Such a Trade Official, if he has any leisure and energy left at the end of his exhausting day's work, broods over larger problems, still special to his own industry. The Secretary of a Cotton Union finds it necessary to puzzle his head over the employers' contention that Bimetallism, or a new Indian Factory Act, deserves the operatives' support, or to think out some way of defeating the evasions of the law against oversteaming or of the "particulars clause." The whole staff of the Boilermakers will be absorbed in considering the effect of the different systems of apprenticeship in the shipyards, or the proper method of meeting the ruinously violent fluctuations in shipbuilding. And the modern Knight of St. Crispin racks his brains about none of these things, but is wholly concerned with the evil of home work, and whether the inspection of small workshops would be more rigidly carried out under the Home Office or under the Town Council. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Trade Officials are characterised by an intense and somewhat narrow sectionalism. The very knowledge of and absorption in the technical details of one particular trade, which makes them such expert specialists, prevents them developing the higher qualities

necessary for the political leadership of the Trade Union world.

To complete our account of the Civil Service of Trade Unionism, we must include, with the permanent staff of the skilled trades, the organisers and secretaries of the Labour Unions—a less stable class, numbering in 1892 about two hundred. In contrast with the practice of the old-established societies these officers are not always selected from the ranks of the workers whose affairs they administer.[1] In critical times, the cause of the unskilled workers attracts, from the ranks of the non-commissioned officers of other industries, men of striking capacity, far superior in political insight and breadth of view to the typical Trade Official. But these men regard themselves, and are regarded, more as apostles to the unconverted than as professional officers. Even if they devote the whole of their time to the work, and accept a salary by way of maintenance, they are ready, and even anxious, to cede their posts as soon as competent successors among their constituents can be found. No Labour Union can count permanently on the service of men of the calibre of Mr. Tom Mann or Mr. John Burns. In the main the unskilled workmen have to rely for officers on themselves. In not a few cases a sturdy general labourer has proved himself a first-rate administrator of a great national Union. But it is a special drawback to the Labour Unions that the "failures," who drift from other occupations into the ranks of unskilled labour, frequently get elected, on account of their superior education, to posts in which personal self-control and persistent industry are all-important. Nor are the duties such as develop either regular habits or business capacity. The absence of any

[1] For instance, Henry Taylor, the coadjutor of Mr. Joseph Arch in organising the agricultural labourers in 1872, was a carpenter; Mr. Tom Mann, for two years salaried President of the Dock, Wharf, and Riverside Labourers, is a member of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers; whilst Mr. McHugh, for some time General Secretary of the National Union of Dock Labourers, is a compositor.

extensive system of friendly benefits reduces to a minimum the administrative functions and clerical labour of the head office. The members, for the most part engaged simply in general labour, and paid by the day or hour, have no occasion for elaborate piecework lists, even supposing that their Unions had won that full recognition by the employers which such arrangements imply. On the other hand, the branches of a Labour Union are, for one reason or another, always crumbling away; and the total membership is only maintained by perpetually breaking fresh ground. Hence the greater part of the organiser's time is taken up in maintaining the enthusiasm of his members, and in sweeping in new converts. This involves constant travelling, and the whirl of excitement implied in an everlasting round of missions in non-Union districts. The typical organiser of a Labour Union approximates, therefore, more closely than any other figure in the Trade Union world to the middle-class conception of a Trade Union official. He is, in fact, a professional agitator. He may be a saint or he may be an adventurer; but he is seldom a man of affairs.[1]

[1] The fervent energy of the typical official of the Labour Union is well described in the following sketch by Mrs. Bruce Glasier (Katherine Conway), a member of the "Independent Labour Party." "He has his offices, but is generally conspicuous there for his absence. Walter Crane's 'Triumph of Labour' hangs on the wall, and copies of *The Fabian Essays*, and the greater proportion of the tracts issued by the Manchester or Glasgow Labour Presses lie scattered over the room. In England Byron and Shelley, in Scotland Byron and Burns, are the approved poets. Carlyle and a borrowed Ruskin or two are also in evidence, and a library edition of Thorold Rogers' *Work and Wages*. John Stuart Mill's *Political Economy*, side by side with a *Student's Marx* give proof of a laudable determination to go to the roots of the matter, and to base all arguments on close and careful study. But the call to action is never-ceasing, and train-travelling, ir conducive to the enormous success of the new journalism, affords but little opportunity for serious reading. 'The daily newspapers are continually filled with lies, which one ought to know how to refute,' and the situation all over the globe 'may develop at any moment.'

"Yet, unlike the old Unionist leader, he is ever ready for the interviewer or the sympathetic inquirer, of whatever class or sex. Right

From this slight sketch of the Civil Service of the Trade Union world it will be obvious that of the three types which we have distinguished, it is the Trade Officials of the old-established Unions who constitute the most effective force in the industrial and political field. The General Secretaries of the Trade Friendly Societies are apt to care little for industrial negotiation or legislative change except in so far as these affect the growth or stability of their associations. The organisers of the unskilled Unions, though frequently ardent reformers of advanced views, have, as a rule, neither the intimate acquaintance with their members' daily lives, nor the long official training, nor even the assured position necessary to render them effective promoters of industrial or legislative reforms. And whilst the number of officers of the friendly society type remains fairly stationary, and the organisers of the unskilled Unions come and go from year to year, the body of distinctively Trade Officials of the better paid industries is steadily and even rapidly increasing.

The Trade Union world has thus many of the elements of a fully formed Democratic State—an extensive population, universal suffrage, a large proportion of active citizens, and a class of salaried officials working under representative committees or councils. But it lacks one essential feature of an effective social organisation, still more of a militant force. It possesses no capital or

racily he will describe the rapid growth of the movement since the great dock strike of 1889, and show the necessity in dealing with such mixed masses of men as fill the ranks of unskilled labour to-day, of continually striking while the iron is hot, and of substituting a policy of *coup d'état* for the deliberate preparation of the older Unions. 'Lose here, win there,' is our only motto, he says, resolutely determined to look at defeat from the point of view of a general-in-chief, and not from the narrower range of an officer in charge of a special division. At the moment of surrender he may have been white to the lips, but the next day will find him cheery and undaunted in another part of the country, carrying on his campaign and enrolling hundreds of recruits by the sheer energy of his confident eloquence." (*Weekly Sun*, January 28, 1894.)

central headquarters. Its officials are scattered all over the country. The General Secretaries of the great Trade Friendly Societies and the Labour Unions are dispersed between London, Manchester, Newcastle, Glasgow, Liverpool, and Leicester. The officials of the Cotton Operatives are quartered in half a dozen Lancashire towns, and those of the Miners in every coalfield. The District Delegates of the Engineering and Shipbuilding Trades and the organisers of the Dockers and the Seamen are stationed in all the principal ports. In the case of particular trades, or groups of allied trades, this dispersion of leadership is remedied by elaborate and costly arrangements. The Miners' Federation calls together the Agents of the separate Miners' Unions in frequent meetings at different towns. The General Secretary of the Boilermakers will summon his nine District Delegates to meet him in conference at London, Newcastle, or Manchester, whenever their counsels are required for an important negotiation. The salaried officers of the Cotton-spinners, Cotton-weavers, and Card-room hands meet in frequent consultation on the Executive of the United Textile Workers' Association. The General Secretaries of the Engineering and Shipbuilding Societies take counsel together at Manchester, Newcastle, or Glasgow in the Executive Committee meetings of the Federation of Engineering and Shipbuilding Trades. And in most industrial centres the separate organisations in the Building and Engineering Trades respectively are united for local purposes in joint committees or federal bodies, of which the London Building Trades Federation (established 1891, 45,000 members) is the most notable example.

But all this federal machinery is confined to different societies in the same industry, or in allied trades, and the proceedings are limited to matters directly affecting the trade interests of the societies concerned. Trade Unionism as a whole has, at present, no meeting ground except the local Trades Councils and the annual gathering known as the Trade Union Congress.

The local Trades Councils, of which there are now about 120 in existence, including in their membership nearly a third of the Trade Unionists in the kingdom, do in some degree succeed in uniting the energies of the Trade Unions of a particular town, so far as municipal politics are concerned. They have, for instance, been the main force in securing the general adoption of the Fair Wages Clause, and in furthering the election of Labour Candidates to local governing bodies. But they have no recognised authority in the Trade Union world; they are rigidly excluded from all participation in the government or trade policy of the Unions; and their influence on political questions of national scope has hitherto been infinitesimal. Consisting, as in the main they do, of the delegates elected by branches of national societies, they are hampered by the narrow limits of the branch autonomy. For in trade matters the branch can bring to the Council no power which it does not itself possess, whilst towards any action involving expense by the Council it can contribute only the voluntary extra subscriptions of its members. The resources of the Councils accordingly seldom suffice for more than the hire of a room to meet in,[1] the necessary postage and stationery, and the payment of a few pounds a year for the "loss of time" of their principal officers. In no case except London does a Trades Council command the whole time of even a single salaried official.

Nor do the Councils enjoy the moral support of the great Unions. The central executives of the national societies view with suspicion and jealousy the existence of governing bodies in which they are not directly represented. The local branches, if not actually forbidden, are not encouraged to adhere to what might conceivably become a rival authority. The strong county Unions frequently stand aloof unless they are

[1] At Nottingham, Leicester, Brighton, Hanley, Manchester, Worcester, and some other towns, the Trades Council is allowed the use of a room in the Town Hall, or other municipal building.

allowed an overwhelming representation. Above all, the Councils have hitherto failed to attract the best brains of the Trade Union Movement. The salaried officials of the old-established societies seldom take part in their proceedings. The London Trades Council, for instance, the classic meeting-place of the Junta, can no longer count among its delegates the General Secretaries of the Engineers, Ironfounders, Bricklayers, or of any other of the great Trade Friendly Societies now quartered in London. The powerful coterie of cotton officials forms no part of the Manchester Trades Council. Of the Boilermakers, neither the General Secretary nor any one of the nine District Delegates is to be found on a Trades Council. The Miners' Agents are notorious for abstention from the Councils in their localities. With few exceptions, the salaried civil servants of the Trade Union Movement are either disinclined or too busy to take part in the discussions of bodies of shifting delegates on questions falling outside the scope of their official duties. The result is that the constitution and functions of the Trades Councils, in marked contrast with the various types of Trade Union, show, after thirty years' existence, no sign of growth or development. And it is significant that Trades Councils are most efficient in those towns, such as Sheffield, Nottingham, and, to a lesser degree, Oldham and Bolton, in which they are not so much councils of all trades, as federations of local Unions in different branches of the same industry. In short, the Trades Councils, whilst serving as a useful meeting ground for local Trade Unionists, contribute at present little to the solidarity or political efficiency of the Trade Union Movement as a whole.

The Trade Union Congress, which meets annually in some industrial centre, serves many useful purposes. It is, to begin with, an outward and visible sign of that persistent sentiment of solidarity which has throughout the whole of this century distinguished the working class. Composed of delegates from all the great national and

county Unions, the principal Trades Councils, and a large number of local societies, and largely attended by the salaried officials, the Congress, unlike the Trades Councils, is really representative of all the elements of the Trade Union world. Hence its discussions reveal, both to the Trade Union Civil Service and to party politicians, the movement of opinion among all sections of Trade Unionists, and, through them, of the great body of the wage-earners. Moreover, the week's meeting gives a unique opportunity for friendly intercourse between the representatives of the different trades, and thus leads frequently to joint action or wider federations. Nevertheless the Congress remains, as we have described it in its early years, rather a parade of the Trade Union forces than a genuine Parliament of Labour.[1]

All the incidental circumstances tend to accentuate the parade features of Congress at the expense of its legislative capacity. The Mayor and Corporation of the city in which it is held give a public welcome to the delegates, and usually hold a sumptuous reception in their honour. The strangers' gallery is full of interested observers. Distinguished foreigners, representatives of Government departments, deputations from the Co-operative Union and other far-reaching organisations, inquisitive politicians,

[1] In the early period of its history the middle-class friends of Trade Unionism read papers and took part in debates. But for some years no one has been allowed to participate in its proceedings in any capacity except duly elected delegates who have worked at the trade they represent. In 1892 and 1893 admission was further limited to those societies which contributed a specified amount per thousand members to the funds of the Congress. The Parliamentary Committee consists of ten members and a secretary, elected by ballot on the fifth day of the Congress. The successful candidates are usually the salaried officers of the great societies, the Standing Orders expressly providing that no trade shall have more than one representative. The Secretary receives but £200 a year, out of which he must provide a clerk, and the post is now filled by an officer enjoying emoluments for other duties. For the last fourteen years the holder has been a member of Parliament, with prior obligations to his constituents, which are not always consistent with the directions of his fellow Trade Unionists.

and popularity-hunting ministers sit through every day's proceedings. The press table is crowded with reporters from all the principal newspapers of the kingdom, whilst the local organs vie with each other in bringing out special editions containing verbatim reports of each day's discussions. But what more than anything else makes the Congress a holiday demonstration, instead of a responsible deliberative assembly, is its total lack of legislative power. The delegates are well aware that Congress resolutions have no binding effect on their constituents, and therefore do not take the trouble to put them in practicable form, or even to make them consistent one with another. From the outset the proceedings are unbusinesslike. The first day is consumed in pure routine, most of which might well be "taken as read." The best part of another day is absorbed by a lengthy inaugural address from the President, a local Trade Unionist seldom of national standing. The rest of the agenda consists of resolutions sent in by the various Unions and Trade Councils, and brought higgledy-piggledy before the Congress in an order determined by the chances of the ballot. These resolutions, emanating, in the main, either from the non-commissioned officers of the movement, or from the more politically minded Labour Unions, are subjected to no selection or revision, and are usually academic, or even impracticable, in their terms. The delegates have at their disposal about twenty-five hours to discuss every imaginable subject, ranging from the nationalisation of the means of production down to the prohibition of one carter driving two vehicles at a time. To enable even a minority of those present to speak for or against the proposals, each speaker is limited to five, or perhaps to three minutes, a rule which is rigidly enforced upon all alike. But, in spite of this vigorous application of the closure, the President, unused to so large and excited a meeting, is quite unable to get the business through, and has frequently as much as he can do to maintain order. The Standing Orders Committee is entirely taken up with

investigating the *bonâ fides* of particular delegates and other mechanical business, and can render no assistance. Nor does the Congress receive much guidance from experienced officials of the old-established Unions. Whether from a good-natured desire to let the private members have their turn at figuring in the newspapers, or from a somewhat cynical appreciation of the fruitlessness of Congress discussions, they lie low, and seldom speak except to defend themselves against attacks. Moreover, they are busily engaged, both in and out of Congress hours, in arranging for the election of themselves or their friends on the Parliamentary Committee. When the four days' talk draws near to an end, half the resolutions on the agenda are still undisposed of. On the Saturday morning, when most of the delegates have started for home, a thin meeting hurries rapidly through the remainder of the proposals, speeches are reduced to sixty seconds each, and the Congress adopts a score of important resolutions in a couple of hours. From first to last there is no sign of a "Front Bench" of responsible leaders. As a business meeting the whole function of the Congress is discharged in the election of the Parliamentary Committee, to which the political representation of the Trade Union world for the ensuing year is entrusted.

The duties of the Parliamentary Committee have never been expressly defined by Congress, and it will easily be understood that resolutions of the kind we have described afford but little guidance for practical work. But there is a general understanding that the Committee is to watch over the political interests of its constituents, in much the same way as the Parliamentary Committee of a town council or a railway company It is obvious that, in the case of the Trade Union world, such a mandate covers a wide field. The right of Free Association, won by Allan, Applegarth, Odger, and their allies, is now a past issue, but the Trade Union interest in legislation has, with the advance of Democracy, extended to larger and more complicated problems. The complete democratisation

of the political machinery, the duty of the Government to be a model employer, the further regulation of private enterprise through perfected factory legislation, the public administration of monopolies, are all questions in which the Trade Union world of to-day considers itself keenly interested. To these distinctly labour issues must be added such interests of the non-propertied class as the incidence of taxation, the public provision for education and recreation, and the maintenance of the sick and the aged. We have here an amount of Parliamentary business far in excess of that falling upon the Parliamentary Committee of any ordinary town council or railway company. To examine all bills, public or private, introduced into Parliament that may possibly affect any of the foregoing Trade Union interests; to keep a constant watch on the administration of the public departments; to scrutinise the Budget, the Education Code, and the Orders of the Local Government Board; to bring pressure to bear on the Ministry of the day, so as to mould the Queen's Speech into a Labour Programme; to promote independent bills on all the subjects upon which the Government refuses to legislate; and, lastly, to organise that persistent "lobbying" of Ministers and private members which finally clinches a popular demand—all this constitutes a task which would tax the energies of half a dozen highly-trained Parliamentary agents devoting their whole time to their clients. This is the work which the Trade Union Congress delegates to a committee of busy officials, all absorbed in the multifarious details of their own societies, and served only by a Secretary who is paid for a small part of his time, and who accordingly combines the office with other duties.[1]

[1] The situation is further complicated by the fact that Mr. C. Fenwick, M.P., who in 1890 succeeded Mr. Henry Broadhurst in the office, is one of the Parliamentary representatives of the Durham Miners, a majority of whom are not in accordance with the decision of the Congress on the crucial question of an Eight Hours Bill. It is in vain that Mr. Fenwick, with most engaging candour, explains to each successive Congress that his pledges to his constituents, no less

The whole organisation is so absurdly inadequate to the task, that the committee can hardly be blamed for giving up any attempt to keep pace with the work. The members leave their provincial headquarters fifteen or twenty times a year to spend a few hours in the little offices at 19, Buckingham Street, Strand, in deliberating upon such business as their Secretary brings before them. Preoccupied with the affairs of their societies, and unversed in general politics, they either confine their attention to the interests of their own trades, or look upon the fortnightly trip to London as a pleasant recreation from hard official duties. In the intervals between the meetings the Secretary struggles with the business as best he can, with such clerical help as he can afford to pay for out of his meagre allowance. Absorbed in his own Parliamentary duties, for the performance of which his constituents pay him a salary, he can devote to the general interests of the Trade Union world only the leavings of his time and attention. It is therefore not surprising to learn that the agenda laid before the Parliamentary Committee, instead of covering the extensive field indicated by the resolutions of the Congress, is habitually reduced to the barest minimum. The work annually accomplished by the Committee during the last few years has, in fact, been limited to a few deputations to the Government, two or three circulars to the Unions, a little consultation with friendly politicians, and the drafting of an elaborate report to Congress, describing, not their own doings, but the legislation and other Parliamentary proceedings of the

than his own opinions, will compel him actively to oppose all regulation of the hours of adult male labour. The Congress nevertheless re-elects him as Secretary to the Parliamentary Committee, protecting itself by packing the committee with men of opposite views. This is only another example of the extraordinary constancy (referred to at p. 457) with which a working-class organisation adheres to a man who has once been elected an officer—a constancy due, as we think, partly to a generous objection to "do a man out of his job," and partly to a deep-rooted belief that any given piece of work can be done as well by one man as another.

session. The result is that the executive committees of the United Textile Factory Workers' Association and the Miners' Federation exercise a far more potent influence in the lobby than the Committee representing the whole Trade Union world; whilst such expert manipulators as Mr. John Burns, Mr. Havelock Wilson, or Mr. George Howell, can point to more reforms effected in a single session than the Parliamentary Committee has lately accomplished during a whole Parliament.

It is therefore not surprising that there exists in the Trade Union world a growing feeling of irritation against the Parliamentary Committee. In each successive Congress the Committee, instead of taking the lead, finds itself placed on its defence. But it is obvious that Congress itself is to blame. The members of the Committee, including the Secretary, are men of quite as sterling character and capacity as a board of railway directors or a committee of town councillors. But whereas a railway company or a town council places at the disposal of its Parliamentary Committee the whole energies of a specially trained town clerk or solicitor, and allows him, moreover, to call to his aid as many expert advisers as he thinks fit, the Trade Union Congress expects the Parliamentary affairs of a million and a half members to be transacted by a staff inferior to that of a third-rate Trade Union. At one period, it is true, the leaders of the Trade Union world as a whole successfully conducted a long and arduous Parliamentary campaign. We have described in a previous chapter the momentous legislative revolution in the status of Trade Unionism which was effected between 1867 and 1875. But the Conference of Amalgamated Trades, and its successor the Parliamentary Committee, had in these years at their command the freely-given services of such a galaxy of legal and Parliamentary talent as Mr. Frederic Harrison, Professor E. S. Beesly, Mr. Henry Crompton, Mr. Thomas (now Judge) Hughes, Messrs. Godfrey and Vernon Lushington, and Mr. (now Justice) R. S. Wright.

The objection felt by the present generation of Trade Unionists to be beholden to middle-class friends is not without a certain validity. But if the Trade Union Congress wants its Parliamentary business done it must, at any rate, provide such a salary as will secure the full services of the ablest man in the movement, equip his office with an adequate number of clerks, and authorise the Parliamentary Committee to retain such expert professional assistance as may from time to time be required.

In the foregoing brief sketch we have sought only to complete our narrative by giving the reader a bird's-eye view of the Trade Union world as it exists to-day. Alike in this sketch and in the preceding history we have endeavoured to confine ourselves to a statement of facts in such detail as is necessary for any understanding of the Trade Union Movement. We have purposely refrained from summing up these facts, either in the course of the narrative or in a final chapter. Throughout the volume we have avoided arguing whether the numerous conflicts and temporary successes of various bodies of organised workmen have or have not resulted in a permanent and progressive elevation of the Standard of Life, either of particular sections or of the whole class of wage-earners. Nor have we attempted to discuss the intricate problems presented by the existence of a sectional organisation by trades in the midst of a community of non-Unionists. On these points we have, in the course of our investigations, formed definite opinions. To state and justify our particular views would involve a detailed analysis of the actual working of trade combinations impossible in a general history of the movement. To sum up, for instance, the economic effects of Trade Unionism we should have minutely to examine, not only the recorded facts as to movements of wages and hours, but also the more subtle consequences upon industrial organisation, the accumulation of capital, and the quantity and quality of commercial brain-power; we should be

compelled to trace the results of the infinite variety of Trade Union regulations, from the universal insistence on a Standard Rate to such purely technical demands as the miners' "abolition of Billy Fair Play;" finally, we should have to compute and set off, one against another, the conflicting claims of various classes of workers with regard to boy labour, piecework, and new processes, weighing, for example, the Cotton-spinners' insistence on payment by the list, the employment of an unlimited number of learners, and the utmost possible improvement of the self-acting mule, against the Engineers' preference for a Time-wage, the Compositors' Limitation of Apprentices, and the Pearl-button Makers' Prohibition of Machinery. Arrived at definite conclusions as to the economic effect of Trade Unionism on the prosperity of particular industries, we should still have to inquire into the perennial question of the Trade Unionist attitude to non-society workmen, women wage-earners, and child-labour—above all, into the relation of the Trade Union to such other forms of Democratic organisation as the Co-operative Association of Consumers, the Municipality, and the National Government.

Besides these more obvious problems, the reader will be aware that the Trade Union world affords, in its internal relations, a rich field for economic and political research. The mass of facts contained in Trade Union records with regard to the competition between societies, the overlap between Union and Union, and the apportionment of work between trade and trade, reveals the difficulty of transferring to voluntary and sectional organisations any share of collective ownership or any full measure of collective control. But Trade Union history does more than discover to us fresh problems and new complications: in many directions it gives practical guidance. The student of Democracy is always deploring the narrow range of observation and experiment afforded by the brief histories of the few modern republican states. To him the Trade Union world offers the century-long experience

of a thousand self-governing working-class communities, with unrestricted capacity for adaptation and change. The innumerable variations in the structure of these free Democracies, the complexities and divergences of their constitutions, their elaborate devices for preserving a due balance of power between the executive and the members, the relation of their central to their local governments, their financial checks and counter-checks, their use of the Mass Meeting, the Council of Delegates, the Ballot, the Initiative, and the Referendum, alike in the appointment of officers, executive government, the decision of policy, and the enactment of laws—in short, their prolonged trial of the best-known machinery of representative government, and their frequent invention of new forms and devices for the better administration of their little republics—all afford unrivalled material for generalisations full of significance to the philosopher and the statesman.

Finally, we have the less philosophical but more pressing question of the position to be taken by the Trade Union world in the party struggles of To-day and the politics of To-morrow. In our chapter on "The Old Unionism and the New," we described the rapid conversion of the superior workman to the general principles of Collectivism. This revolution of opinion in the rank and file has been followed by a marked change of front on the part of the salaried officials, and by a growing distrust of the aristocratic and middle-class representatives of both the great political parties. To the working-man politician of 1894 it seems inconceivable that either landlords or capitalists will actively help him to nationalise land and mining royalties, to absorb unearned incomes by taxation, or to control private enterprise in the interests of the wage-earner. Thus we find throughout the whole Trade Union world an almost unanimous desire to make the working-class organisations in some way effective for political purposes. Nor is this a new thing. The sense of solidarity has, as we have seen, never been lacking

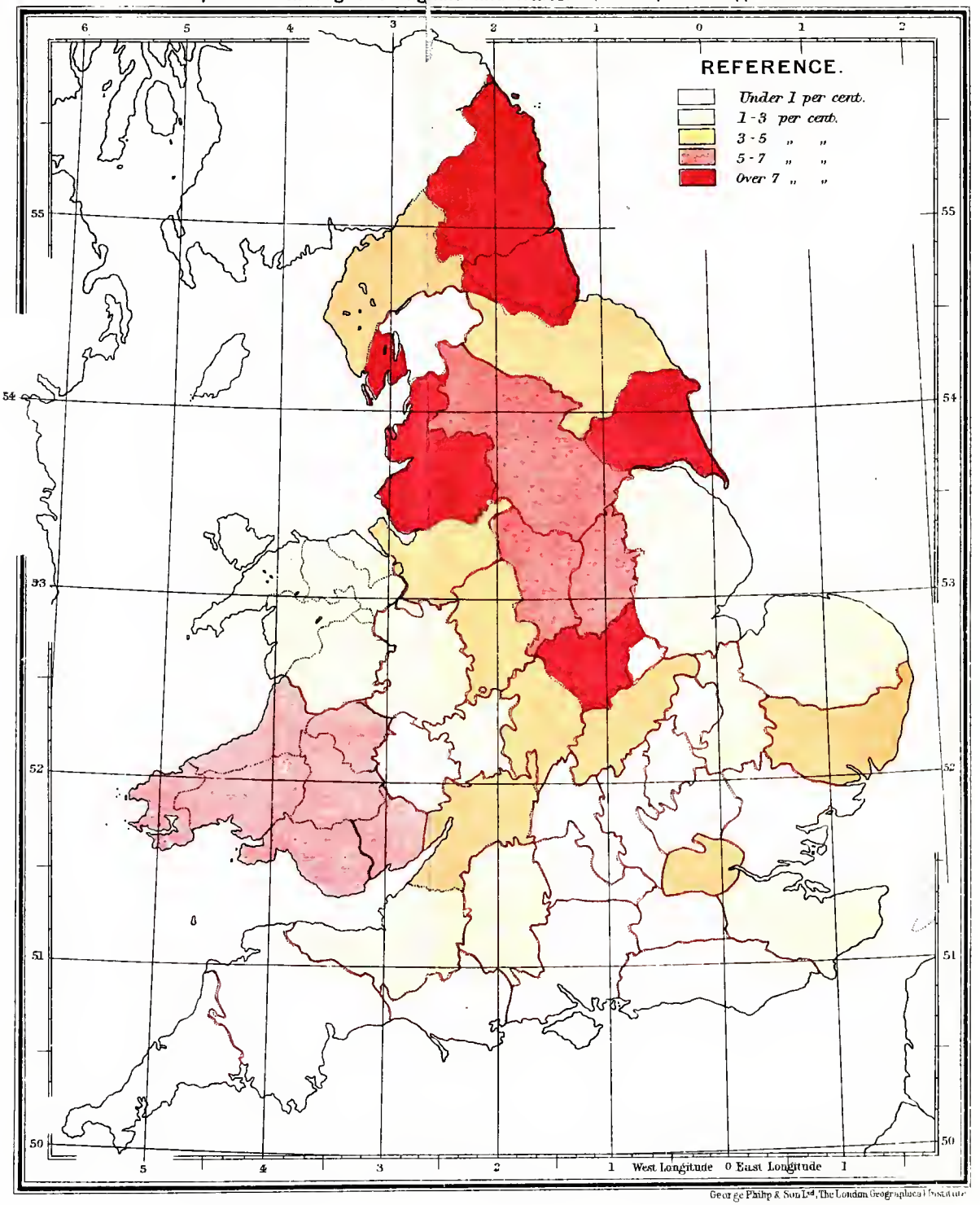
among those active soldiers and non-commissioned officers who constitute the most vital element in the Trade Union army. The generous aid from trade to trade, the pathetic attempts to form General Unions, the constant aspirations after universal federation, all testify to the reality and force of this instinctive solidarity. The Collectivist faith of the "New Unionism" is only another manifestation of the same deep-rooted belief in the essential Brotherhood of Labour. But, as we have seen, the basis of the association of these million and a half wage-earners is, primarily, sectional in its nature. They come together, and contribute their pence, for the defence of their interests as Boilermakers, Miners, Cotton-spinners, and not directly for the advancement of the whole working class. Among the salaried officers of the Unions, it is, as we have said, the Trade Official, chosen and paid for the express purpose of maintaining the interests of his own particular trade, who is the active force. The effect has been to intensify the sectionalism to which an organisation based on trades must necessarily be prone. The vague general Collectivism of the non-commissioned officers has hitherto got translated into practical proposals only in so far as it can be expressed in projects for the advantage of a particular trade. Some organised trades have known how to draft and to extort from Parliament a voluminous Labour Code, the provisions of which are exceptionally well adapted for the protection of the particular workers concerned. The "particulars clause" [1] and the law against the "over-steaming" of weaving sheds are, for instance, triumphs of collective control which could hardly have been conceived by any one except the astute trade officials of the Cotton Operatives. But there is no attempt to deal with any question as a whole. Trade Unionists are, for instance, unanimously in favour of drastic legislation to

[1] Sec. 24 of the Factory Act of 1891 provides, as regards textile manufactures, that the employer shall supply every worker by the piece with certain particulars as to the quantity of work and rate of remuneration for it.

put down "sweating" in all trades whatsoever. But no salaried officer of the Trade Union world feels it to be his business to improve the Labour Code for any industry but his own. Thus, whereas the Factory Acts have been effectively elaborated to meet the special circumstances of a few trades, for all the rest they remain in the form of merely general prohibitions which it is practically impossible to enforce. How far it is possible, by the development of Trades Councils, the reform of the Trade Union Congress, the increased efficiency of the Parliamentary Committee, the growth of Trade Union representation in the House of Commons, or, finally, by the creation of any new federal machinery, to counteract the fundamental sectionalism of Trade Union organisation, to supplement the specialised trade officials by an equally specialised Civil Service of working-class politicians, and thus to render the Trade Union world, with its million of electors, and its leadership of Labour, an effective political force in the State, is, on the whole, the most momentous question of contemporary politics.

The solution of these difficult questions, economic, constitutional, and political, demands, as we have said, a detailed analysis of the actual working of Trade Unionism in particular industries. That analysis, and the facts upon which it is based, we propose to present in a separate volume on the Problems of Trade Unionism.

Map showing the DISTRIBUTION OF TRADE UNIONISTS in 1892 in proportion to Population throughout England and Wales. (See Chapter 8 & Appendix IV.)



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APPENDIX.

APPENDIX.

I. On the assumed connection between the Trade Unions and the Gilds in Dublin.

In Dublin the Trade Union descent from the Gilds is embodied in the printed documents of the Unions themselves, and is commonly assumed to be confirmed by their possession of the Gild charters. The Trade Union banners not only, in many cases, bear the same arms as the old Gilds, but often also the date of their incorporation. Thus, the old society of "regular" carpenters (now a branch of the Amalgamated) claims to date from 1490; the "Regular Operative House-painters' Trade Union" connects itself with the Guild of St. Luke, 1670; and the local unions of bricklayers and plasterers assume the date of the incorporation of the Bricklayers and Plasterers Company by Charles II. (1670). The box of the Dublin Bricklayers' Society does, in fact, contain a parchment which purports to be the original charter of the latter Company. How this document, given to the exclusively Protestant incorporation of working masters, which was abolished by statute in 1840, came into the possession of what has always been a mainly Roman Catholic body of wage earners, dating certainly from 1830, is not clear. The parchment, which is bereft of its seal and bears on the back, in the handwriting of a lawyer's clerk, the words "Bricklayers, 28th June, 1843," was probably thrown aside as worthless after the dissolution of the Company.

A search among contemporary pamphlets brought to light an interesting episode in the history of the Dublin building trades. It appears that, after the dissolution of the Company, Benjamin Pemberton, who had been Master, and who was evidently a man of energy and ability, attempted to form an alliance between the then powerful journeymen bricklayers and plasterers societies, and the master bricklayers and plasterers, in order to resist the common enemy, the "foreign contractor." This had long been a favourite project of Pemberton's. Already in 1812 he had urged the rapidly

decaying company to resist the uprising of "builders," and to admit Roman Catholic craftsmen. But the Company, which then included scarcely a dozen practising master bricklayers or plasterers, took no action. In 1832 Pemberton turned to the men, and vainly proposed to the "Trades Political Union," a kind of Trades Council, that they should take common action against "the contract system." At last, in 1846, six years after the abolition of the Company, he seems to have succeeded in forming some kind of alliance. The journeymen bricklayers and plasterers were induced to accept, from himself and his associates, formal certificates of proficiency. Several of these certificates signed by Pemberton and other employers, are in the possession of the older workmen, but no one could explain to us their use. The alliance probably rested on some promise of preference for employment on the one part, and refusal to work for a contractor on the other. This close connection between a leading member of the Company and the Trade Unionists may perhaps account for the old charter, then become waste paper, finding its way into the Trade Union chest.

Particulars of Pemberton's action will be found in the pamphlet entitled *An Address of the Bricklayers and Plasterers to the tradesmen of the City of Dublin on the necessity of their co-operating for the attainment of their corporate rights and privileges*, by Benjamin Pemberton (Dublin, 1833, 36 pages), preserved in Vol. 1567 of the *Haliday Tracts* in the Royal Irish Academy. In no other case, either in Dublin or elsewhere, have we found a Trade Union in possession of any Gild documents or relics.

The absolute impossibility of any passage of the Dublin Companies into the local Trade Unions will be apparent when we remember that the bulk of the wage-earning population of the city are, and have always been, Roman Catholics. The Dublin Companies were, to the last, rigidly confined to Episcopalian Protestants. Even after the barriers had been nominally removed by the Catholic Emancipation in 1829, the Companies, then shrunk up into little cliques of middle class capitalists, with little or no connection with the trades, steadfastly refused to admit any Roman Catholics to membership. A few well-to-do Roman Catholics forced themselves in between 1829 and 1838, by mandamus. But when inquiry was made in 1838 by the Commissioners appointed under the Municipal Corporations Act, only half-a-dozen Roman Catholics were members, and the Companies were found to be composed, in the main, of capitalists and professional men. There is no evidence that even one wage-earner was in their ranks. Long before this time the Trade Unions of Dublin had obtained an unenviable notoriety. Already, in 1824, the Chief Constable of

Dublin testified to the complete organization of the operatives in illegal associations. In 1838 O'Connell made his celebrated attack upon them in the House of Commons, which led to a Select Committee. In short, whilst the Dublin Companies were, until their abolition by the Act of 1840, in much the same condition as those of London, with the added fact of religious exclusiveness, the Dublin Trade Unions were long before that date at the height of their power.

The adoption by the Dublin Trade Unions of the arms, mottoes, saints, and dates of origin of the old Dublin Gilds is more interesting as a trait of Irish character than as any proof of historic continuity. Thus, in their rules of 1883, the bricklayers content themselves with repeating the original preface common to the Trade Societies which were formed in the beginning of this century, to the effect that "the journeyman bricklayers of the City of Dublin have imposed on themselves the adoption of the following laudable scheme of raising a Fund for friendly society purposes." A card of membership dated 1830 bears no reference to the Gild or Company of Bricklayers and Plasterers from whom descent is now claimed. The rules of 1883 are entitled those of the "incorporated" brick or stone layers association, and in the edition of 1888 this had developed into the "Ancient Gild of Saint Bartholomew." Finally the coat of arms of the old company with the date of its incorporation ("A.D. 1670") appear on the new banner of the society. Similarly, the old local society of "Regular Carpenters," which was well-known as a Trade Union in 1824, and was engaged in a strike in 1833 (seven years before the abolition of the "Company of Carpenters, Millers, Masons, and Tylers, or Gild of the fraternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, of the house of St. Thomas the Martyr," established by Henry VIII. in 1532), adopted for the first time in its rules of 1881, the coat of arms and motto of the Gild, but retained its own title of "The United Brothers of St. Joseph." The card of membership printed in 1887 boldly gives the date of establishment as 1458, whilst other printed matter places it at 1490. The Dublin painters now inscribe 1670 on their new banner, but the earliest traditions of their members date only from 1820. In short, the Irish Trade Unionist, with his genuine love for the picturesque, and his reverence for historical association, has steadily "annexed" antiquity, and has embraced every opportunity for transferring the origin of his society a few generations further back.

II. Sliding Scales.

The Sliding Scale, an arrangement by which it is agreed in advance that wages shall vary in a definite relation to changes in the market price of the product, appears to have been familiar to the iron trade for a couple of generations. "About fifty years ago Mr. G. B. Thorneycroft, of Wolverhampton, head of a well-known firm of iron-masters, suggested to certain other houses that wages should fluctuate with the price of 'marked bars'—these words indicating a quality of iron that then enjoyed a high reputation. The suggestion was adopted to this extent, that when a demand was made by the men for an advance in wages, any advance that was given was proportionate to the selling price of 'marked bars.' The puddlers received, as a rule, 1*s.* for each pound of the selling price; but on exceptional occasions, a special temporary advance or 'premium' was conceded. The terms of this arrangement do not seem to have been reduced to writing, though they remained in force for many years, and were well known as the Thorneycroft scale."[1]

At the time of the great strike of Staffordshire puddlers in 1865, a local understanding of a similar nature appears to have been in existence. The joint committee of iron-masters and puddlers which was established at Darlington in 1869, as the "North of England Manufactured Iron Board," soon worked out a formal sliding scale for its own guidance. This scale, as well as that adopted by the Midland Iron Trade Board, has been repeatedly revised, abandoned, and again re-established, but its working has, on the whole, commended itself to the representatives of the ironworkers, and has, so far as the principle is concerned, produced no important dissensions among them. "We believe," said Mr. Trow, the men's secretary, to the Labour Commission in 1892, "it would be most satisfactory if this principle were generally adopted . . . In all our experience of the past we have had less trouble in the periods in which sliding scales have obtained." The cause of the exceptional satisfaction of the ironworkers with their Wages Boards and Sliding Scales is obscure, but it may be interesting to the student to note that the members of the Ironworkers Association are largely sub-contractors, themselves employing workmen who are usually outside the Union, and have no direct representation on the Board.

[1] Statement furnished to Professor Munro by Mr. Daniel Jones, of the Midland Iron and Steel Wages Board, quoted in *Sliding Scales in the Coal and Iron Industries*, p. 141.

Widely different has been the result of the Sliding Scale among the coal miners. Its introduction into this trade dates from 1874, though it was not until 1879 that its adoption became common. Since then it has been abandoned in all but a few districts, and it is energetically repudiated by the Miners' Federation. The following table includes all the Sliding Scales in the coal industry known to us. Between 1879 and 1886 there were a number of informal Sliding Scales in force for particular collieries, which were mostly superseded by the more general scales, or otherwise came to an end. At present (1894) we believe that recognised Sliding Scales exist only in South Wales, the Forest of Dean, and part of Staffordshire.

July 24,	1874	South Staffordshire I.	Revised 1877.
May 28,	1875	South Wales I.	„ 1880.
April 13,	1876	Somerset.	Ended 1889.
February 6,	1877	Cannock Chase I.	Revised 1879.
March 14,	1877	Durham I.	„ 1879.
November 1,	1877	South Staffordshire II.	„ 1882.
April 14,	1879	Cannock Chase II.	„ 1882.
October 11,	1879	Durham II.	„ 1887.
October 31,	1879	Cumberland I.	Ended 1881
November 3,	1879	Ferndale Colliery I. (S. Wales).	Revised 1881.
November 10,	1879	Bedworth Colliery I. (Warwick).	„ 1880.
November 15,	1879	Northumberland I.	„ 1883.
December 19,	1879	Ocean Colliery I. (S. Wales).	„ 1882.
January 17,	1880	South Wales II.	„ 1882.
January 20,	1880	West Yorkshire.	Ended ?
January 26,	1880	North Wales.	„ 1881.
February 14,	1880	Bedworth Colliery II.	„ ?
January 1,	1881	Ashton and Oldham I.	Revised 1882.
December 31,	1881	Ferndale Colliery II.	?
January 1,	1882	South Staffordshire III.	Ended 1884.
April 29,	1882	Durham III.	Revised 1884.
June 6,	1882	South Wales III.	„ 1889.
June 22,	1882	Cannock Chase, &c. III.	Ended 1883.
July 18,	1882	Ashton & Oldham II.	„ 1883.
August 24,	1882	South Wales (Anthracite).	?
September 29,	1882	Cumberland II.	Revised 1884.
March 9,	1883	Northumberland II.	Ended 1886.
June 12,	1884	Durham IV.	„ 1889.

November 28,	1884	Cumberland III.	Revised	1886.
March 12,	1886	Forest of Dean.	Ended	1888?
April 14,	1886	Altham Colliery (Northd.).	„	?
February 25,	1887	Cumberland IV.	Ended	1888?
May 24,	1887	Northumberland III.	„	1887.
June,	1887	Lanarkshire.	„	1889.
October,	1888	South Staffordshire IV.		
January 18,	1890	South Wales IV.		
September,	1893	Forest of Dean.		

The best exposition of the construction and working of Sliding Scales is contained in *Industrial Peace* by L. L. Price. Details of numerous Scales are given in the report made by a Committee to the British Association, entitled, *Sliding Scales in the Coal Industry*, which was prepared by Professor J. E. C. Munro (Manchester, 1885), and in the *Particulars of Sliding Scales, Past, Present, and Proposed*, printed by the Lancashire Miners' Federation in 1886 (Openshaw, 1886, 20 pp.). Supplementary information is given in Professor Munro's papers before the Manchester Statistical Society, entitled, "Sliding Scales in the Iron Industry" (Manchester, 1885,) and "Sliding Scales in the Coal and Iron Industries from 1885 to 1889" (Manchester, 1889).

The proceedings in the numerous arbitrations in the coal and iron trade in the North of England, as well as several others which are printed, furnish abundant information on the subject of their working. The most complete table of the variations of wages under sliding scales is that prepared by Profesor J. E. C. Munro for the Royal Commission on Mining Royalties and published as Appendix V. to the First Report, 1890 (C 6195).

III. The Summons to the First Trade Union Congress.

No copy of the invitation to the first Trade Union Congress has been preserved, either in the archives of the Congress, the Manchester Trades' Council, or any other organisation known to us. Fortunately, it was printed in the *Ironworkers' Journal* for May, 1868. But of this only one file now exists, and as the summons is of some historical interest we reprint it for convenience of reference.

"Manchester, April 16th, 1868.

"SIR:

"You are requested to lay the following before your Society. The vital *interests* involved, it is conceived, will justify the officials in convening a special meeting for the consideration thereof.

"The Manchester and Salford Trades' Council having recently taken into their serious consideration the present aspect of Trades' Unions, and the profound ignorance which prevails in the public mind with reference to their operations and principles, together with the probability of an attempt being made by the Legislature, during the present Session of Parliament, to introduce a measure which might prove detrimental to the interests of such Societies *unless some prompt and decisive action be taken by the working classes themselves*, beg most respectfully to intimate that it has been decided to hold in Manchester, as the main centre of industry in the provinces, a Congress of the representatives of Trades' Councils, Federations of Trades, and Trade Societies in general.

"The Congress will assume the character of the Annual Meetings of the Social Science Association in the transactions of which Society the artisan class is almost excluded; and papers previously carefully prepared by such Societies as elect to do so, will be laid before the Congress on the various subjects which at the present time affect the Trade Societies, each paper to be followed by discussion on the points advanced, with a view of the merits and demerits of each question being thoroughly ventilated through the medium of the public press. It is further decided that the subjects treated upon shall include the following:—

1. Trade Unions an absolute necessity.
2. Trade Unions and Political Economy.
3. The effect of Trade Unions on foreign competition.
4. Regulation of the hours of labour.
5. Limitation of apprentices.
6. Technical Education.
7. Courts of Arbitration and Conciliation.
8. Co-operation.
9. The present inequality of the law in regard to conspiracy, intimidation, picketing, coercion, etc.
10. Factory Acts Extension Bill, 1867: the necessity of compulsory inspection and its application to all places where women and children are employed.
11. The present Royal Commission on Trades' Unions—how far worthy of the confidence of the Trade Union interests.
12. Legalization of Trade Societies.

13. The necessity of an Annual Congress of Trade Representatives from the various centres of industry.

"All Trades' Councils, Federations of Trades, and Trade Societies generally, are respectfully solicited to intimate their adhesion to this project on or before the 12th of May next, together with a notification of the subject of the paper that each body will undertake to prepare, and the number of delegates by whom they will be respectively represented; after which date all information as to the place of meeting, etc., will be supplied.

"It is not imperative that all Societies should prepare papers, it being anticipated that the subjects will be taken up by those most capable of expounding the principles sought to be maintained. Several have already adhered to the project, and have signified their intention of taking up the subjects, Nos. 1, 4, 6, and 7.

"The Congress will be held on Whit-Tuesday, the 2nd of June next, its duration not to exceed five days; and all expenses in connection therewith, which will be very small, and as economical as possible, will be equalized amongst those Societies sending delegates, and will not extend beyond their sittings.

"Communications to be addressed to Mr. W. H. Wood, Typographical Institute, 29 Water Street, Manchester.

"By order of the Manchester & Salford Trades' Council.

"S. C. Nicholson, President.

"W. H. Wood, Secretary."

IV. Distribution of Trade Unionists in the United Kingdom.

We have endeavoured to analyse the membership of all the Trade Unions of which we could obtain particulars, in such a way as to show the number and percentage to population in each part of the United Kingdom. The map contained in this volume is based upon the following table, which gives the local distribution of 1,507,026 Trade Unionists. The distribution has, in most cases, been made by branches, special estimates being prepared for us in a few instances by the officers of the unions concerned. With regard to a few unions having about 4,000 members no local distribution could be arrived at.

Table showing the distribution of Trade Union membership in each part of the United Kingdom, with the percentage to population in each case.

County.	Population in 1891.	Ascertained Trade Unionists in 1892.	Number of Trade Unionists per 100 of population.
Bedfordshire	165,999	553	0·33
Berkshire	268,357	975	0·36
Buckinghamshire	164,442	720	0·44
Cambridgeshire	196,269	2,855	1·45
Cheshire	707,978	32,000	4·52
Cornwall	318,583	630	0·20
Cumberland	266,549	10,280	3·86
Derbyshire	432,414	29,510	6·82
Devonshire	636,225	6,030	0·95
Dorsetshire	188,995	305	0·16
Durham	1,024,369	114,810	11·21
Essex (Without West Ham, included in London.)	396,057	3,370	0·85
Gloucestershire	548,886	26,030	4·74
Hampshire (Without Isle of Wight, treated separately.)	587,578	5,665	0·96
Herefordshire	113,346	385	0·34
Hertfordshire	215,179	1,125	0·52
Huntingdonshire	50,289	20	0·04
Isle of Wight	78,672	295	0·37
Kent (Without Bromley, included in London.)	737,044	12,445	1·69
Lancashire	3,957,906	331,535	8·63
Leicestershire	379,286	27,845	7·34
Lincoln	467,281	9,480	2·03
London (Including Bromley, Croydon, Kingston, Richmond, West Ham and Middlesex.)	5,517,583	194,083	3·52

County.	Population in 1891.	Ascertained Trade Unionists in 1892.	Number of Trade Unionists per 100 of population.
Norfolk	460,362	4,880	1·06
Northamptonshire	308,072	12,210	3·96
Northumberland	506,030	56,815	11·23
Nottinghamshire	505,311	31,050	6·14
Oxford	188,220	1,815	0·96
Rutland	22,123	0	0·00
Shropshire	254,765	3,225	1·26
Somerset	510,076	6,595	1·29
Staffordshire	1,103,452	49,545	4·49
Suffolk	353,758	14,885	4·21
Surrey (Without Croydon, Kingston and Richmond included in London.)	275,638	730	0·26
Sussex	554,542	2,810	0·51
Warwickshire	801,738	33,600	4·19
Westmoreland	66,215	530	0·80
Wiltshire	255,119	3,680	1·44
Worcestershire	422,530	7,840	1·86
Yorkshire, East Riding	318,570	23,630	7·42
Yorkshire, North Riding (With York City.)	435,897	15,215	3·49
Yorkshire, West Riding	2,464,415	141,140	5·73
Total, England	27,226,120	1,221,141	4·49
North Wales	451,090	8,820	1·96
South Wales and Monmouth	1,325,315	88,810	6·70
Total Wales and Monmouth	1,776,405	97,630	5·50
Total England and Wales	29,002,525	1,318,771	4·55
Scotland	4,033,103	146,925	3·64
Ireland	4,706,162	40,045	0·85

County.	Population in 1891.	Ascertained Trade Unionists in 1892.	Number of Trade Unionists per 100 of population.
Isle of Man	55,598	75	0·13
Guernsey	35,339	1,170	3·31
Jersey	54,518	40	0·07
Alderney and Sark . . .	2,415	0	0·00
Total United Kingdom	37,889,660	1,507,026	3·98

V. The Progress in Membership of particular Trade Unions.

It is unfortunately impossible to compile any complete statistics of Trade Union membership at different periods. Until the appointment in 1886 of Mr. John Burnett as Labour Correspondent to the Board of Trade, no attempt was made to collect any statistics of the whole movement, and the old Unions seldom possess a complete set of their own archives. The Ironfounders, it is true, have exact figures since their establishment in 1809, and a few other societies have statistical records of old date. No total can, however, be computed with which to compare the present membership of the whole movement. The following table gives such comparative statistics as we have been able to compile. It will be seen that fifteen societies, of which the statistics can be given from 1850 to 1890, have increased from 24,737 to 184,948 members in that period. The twenty-eight societies for which we have figures from 1870, have risen from 142,530 to 343,890. The thirty-four societies, comprising nearly a third of the whole body of Trade Unionists, for which statistics can be given from 1875 to 1890, show an increase in the twenty years from 297,615 to 456,373.

Table showing the Membership of certain Trade Unions

Name of Society.	Year of Establishment.	1850.	1855.
Amalgamated Society of Engineers.	1851 [1]	5,000	12,553
Friendly Society of Ironfounders .	1809	4,073	5,685
Steam Engine Makers' Society .	1824	2,068	1,662
Associated Ironmoulders of Scotland	1831	814	1,381
United Society of Boilermakers and Iron Shipbuilders . . .	1832	1,771	3,500
Operative Stonemasons' Friendly Society	1832	4,671	8,093
Operative Bricklayers' Society .	1848	340	924
General Union of Operative Carpenters and Joiners . . .	1827	535	1,180
Typographical Association . .	1849	603	1,288
London Society of Compositors .	1848	1,800	2,300
Bookbinders' and Machine Rulers' Consolidated Union . . .	1835	420	340
United Kingdom Society of Coachmakers	1834	1,567	3,040
Flint Glass Makers' Friendly Society	1849	500	897
Amicable and Brotherly Society of Machine Printers (Cotton and Calico)	1841	375	452
Machine, Engine, and Iron Grinders' Society	1844	200	110
		24,737	43,405
Associated Blacksmiths' Society .	1857	—	—
Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners	1860	—	—
Associated Carpenters and Joiners .	1861	—	—
National Association of Operative Plasterers	1862	—	—
Northumberland Miners Mutual Confident Association . .	1863	—	—
United Journeymen Brassfounders' Association of Great Britain and Ireland	1866	—	—

[1] Established January 10, 1851. The membership given

at Quinquennial Periods, from 1850 *to* 1890 *inclusive.*

1860.	1865.	1870.	1875.	1880.	1885.	1890.
20,935	30,984	34,711	44,032	44,692	51,689	67,928
7,973	10,604	8,994	12,336	11,580	12,376	14,821
2,050	2,521	2,819	3,871	4,134	5,062	5,822
2,084	3,046	2,766	4,346	4,664	5,611	6,198
4,146	8,621	7,261	16,191	17,688	28,212	32,926
9,125	15,483	13,965	24,543	12,610	11,285	12,538
1,641	4,320	1,441	4,832	5,700	6,412	12,740
2,228	6,986	8,008	10,885	4,420	1,734	2,485
1,473	1,992	2,430	3,600	5,350	6,551	9,016
2,650	2,800	3,350	4,200	5,100	6,435	8,910
500	748	915	1,670	1,501	1,788	2,910
4,086	4,599	5,801	7,251	4,989	4,560	5,367
1,355	1,606	1,776	2,005	1,963	1,985	2,123
508	530	570	650	690	740	860
330	449	280	390	258	277	304
61,084	95,289	95,087	140,802	125,339	144,717	184,948
856	1,815	1,590	2,113	2,002	2,335	2,300
618	5,670	10,178	14,917	17,764	25,781	31,495
—	4,453	3,585	6,642	4,673	4,535	4,742
—	4,441	2,461	3,742	3,211	2,110	4,236
—	4,250	5,328	17,561	10,707	13,128	16,961
—	—	1,457	1,821	1,890	2,344	2,162

for 1850 is that with which the amalgamation started.

Table showing the Membership of certain Trade Unions

Name of Society.	Year of Establishment.	1850.	1855.
United Operative Plumbers' Association	1832	?	?
Alliance Cabinet Makers' Association	1865	—	—
United Operative Bricklayers' Trade, Accident, Sick, and Burial Society	1832	?	
Amalgamated Society of Tailors	1866	—	—
Amalgamated Association of Operative Cotton Spinners	1853	—	?
Glass Bottle Makers of Yorkshire United Trade Protection Society	1860	—	—
Durham Miners' Association	1869	—	—
National Society of Amalgamated Brassworkers	1872	—	—
United Pattern Makers' Association	1872	—	—
National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives	1874	—	—
Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants	1872	—	—
Yorkshire Miners' Association	1858	—	—
United Machine Workers' Association	1844	?	?

at Quinquennial Periods, from 1850 *to* 1890 *inclusive.*

1860.	1865.	1870.	1875.	1880.	1885.	1890.
?	?	1,537	1,679	2,232	2,666	5,350
—	?	242	1,965	1,346	1,246	4,298
?	?	3,850	7,350	3,282	1,975	1,725
—	—	4,006	14,352	12,583	13,969	16,629
?	?	10,518	14,257	11,834	16,579	18,145
?	?	792	1,120	1,061	1,522	1,899
—	—	1,899	38,000	30,000	35,000	49,000
		142,530	266,321	227,924	267,907	343,890
—	—	—	5,271	4,633	3,582	7,958
—	—	—	418	824	1,241	2,205
—	—	—	4,311	6,404	10,464	23,459
—	—	—	13,018	8,589	9,052	26,360
?	?	?	8,000	2,800	8,000	50,000
?	?	?	276	279	455	2,501
			297,615	251,453	300,701	456,373

VI. List of Publications relating to Trade Unions and Combinations of Workmen.

The compilation of a bibliography of Trade Unionism is attended with exceptional difficulty. In modern times the history of Trade Unionism is inextricably bound up, not only with the progress of each trade, but also with the general industrial development. The early history of workmen's combinations takes us back to the voluminous literature of town records and the Gilds. The admission of criticisms upon the working of Trade Unionism would bring in practically the whole literature of economic science. The records of strikes and lock-outs are scattered throughout the newspaper press. The great bulk of the publications of the Trade Unions themselves—the innumerable editions of rules, the thousands of annual and monthly reports, the voluminous lists of piecework prices, the intricate working agreements—are ignored by the British Museum, and are practically never preserved in any public library.

From the following list of publications bearing on Trade Unionism in Great Britain and Ireland we have omitted, for the most part, works dealing with the annals of particular trades or the general industrial history of the country. No student of Trade Union history can dispense with the full bibliography on this subject contained in the two volumes of Mr. Cunningham's *Growth of English Industry and Commerce*. We have, moreover, omitted practically all references to the literature of Gilds and town records, so fully catalogued in Dr. C. Gross's *The Gild Merchant* (vol. i.). Mr. Lambert, setting an example worthy of all praise, has given, in his *Two Thousand Years of Gild Life*, a supplementary list of works not included by Dr. Gross, and we have mentioned two or three more. For the many references to Trade Unions contained in the reports of the Labour Bureaus of the United States up to Nov., 1892, the student may refer to the Third Special Report of the United States Commission of Labour (Washington, 1893, 8°), in which they are analysed and indexed.

The very extensive literature relating to Friendly Societies, referred to in the works of Dr. Baernreither, Rev. J. Frome Wilkinson and others, has usually been omitted as beyond the scope of the present work. Some of the less familiar labour journals have been included, but trade journals and ordinary newspapers have been omitted. Considerations of space have determined the abandonment of any attempt to compile a list of the Parliamentary papers which are indispensable to the inquirer into Trade Union history. The numerous publications of the Royal Commission of Labour

(1891-94), itself but the latest of a series of inquiries dating from 1700, contain numerous references to other sources. Nor have we sought to catalogue the innumerable references to Trade Unionism included in general economic literature, for which the *Dictionary of Political Economy* and the many German and French works of like character may be consulted.

Finally, we have had to decide the difficult problem of how to deal with the literature of the Trade Unions themselves. The number of different rules, circulars, manifestoes, reports, price lists, working agreements, etc., which have been published by the various Unions, amounts to many tens of thousands. Our own collection includes several thousands of such documents, whilst the number of those that we have had lent to us at different times is beyond all computation. In the following list we have included only a few of the more important, the more ancient, or the more accessible of these pamphlets, of which it should be an object of every public library to preserve as many as possible.

In all instances in which we have been able to trace a work in the British Museum we have given its reference number in that collection, referring to other libraries only where the British Museum does not possess a copy of the publication cited. Where a work is known to us as preserved only in the office of the Trade Union concerned, we have added "T.U." Those marked "Foxwell Coll." are in the magnificent collection of economic literature made by Professor H. S. Foxwell, St. John's College, Cambridge. Pamphlets in the extensive collection of Mr. John Burns, M.P., are marked "Burns Coll." "W. Coll." indicates that we are aware of no copy of the work except that in our own possession.

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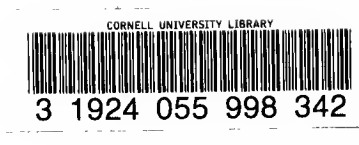
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